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JOHANNES BRAHMS





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JOHANNES BRAHMS

BY RICHARD SPECHT

TRANSLATED BY

ERIC BLOM



WITH SIXTEEN
ILLUSTRATIONS

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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF
RICHARD SPECHT (DRESDEN 1928)

ENGLISH TRANSLATION FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1930

TO
ALICE BARBI

PREFATORY NOTE

A LITERARY occupation that busies itself with manufacturing a twenty-first out of twenty books has always seemed to me suspicious. I may say that my writings never came into being in that manner : the present work no more than the others. Needless to say I had been familiar with the Brahms biographies of Max Kalbeck, Walter Niemann, Florence May, Fuller-Maitland, Wolfgang Thomas-San Galli, Heinrich Reimann and Richard von Perger long before I was impelled to write the pages which follow ; but I did my best to forget them all, and only at the close of my labour did I check my facts with the aid of Kalbeck's life of Brahms—incomparable as a collection of materials, full of colour and warmth in its representation, but too discursive and weighted with superfluous controversy. It was my intention to recount the career of the last great master of music produced by the nineteenth century straight from the documents and not from the descriptions of others. There are no outward or inward events in his life which cannot be gathered from his letters and from his music. Yet I should scarcely have succeeded in drawing my portrait, had I not been in time to enjoy the good fortune of feeling the pressure of the master's firm, stumpy hand, to hear the rusty and creaking voice, to listen to his wholly world-remote, unvirtuosic, self-absorbed playing, and to be in contact with his humanity.

The incitements to write this book were manifold. That a portion of my own life coincided with what I have here to tell and that I was intimately concerned with the people and the events of my story—though it was granted me to see and feel them closely but during the last decade of Brahms's time on earth—is a personal matter which may well justify my desire to write a chronicle of that period, though not my importuning the public.

A better excuse, perhaps, is the fact that the master is here seen and drawn differently, as a more tragic, human and complex figure, if less heroically stylized, than he has ever appeared before. But my true justification is surely that it has perhaps never before appeared so urgently necessary to show a personality of such eminence, so conscious of his responsibility, creating with such self-dominion and inner participation, as it is needful to the world of to-day, which has become estranged from a disposition and attitude such as that of the creator of the "German Requiem", who may well serve it as a great and encouraging example.

I am indebted to many for kindly assisting me in the present work, above all to the most faithful member of the Brahms community, the late Dr. Eusebius Mandyczewsky, registrar of the "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde" in Vienna, who helped to procure the iconographical material; further to the "Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft" and in particular to its President, Professor Max Friedlaender, for placing the whole of Brahms's correspondence at my disposal; also to the publishing houses of N. Simrock and Ernst Eulenburg for facilities to consult his works; and lastly to my friends, among them especially to Marie Herzfeld and Dr. Paul Weingarten for various welcome services, as well as to Rose and Rudolf St. Hoffmann for taking upon them the labour of proof-reading. None of them has had a sight of the manuscript.

Brahms once wrote to Clara Schumann that a fine biography required above all the qualities of skill and feeling in its writer. The question of "skill," that is to say, knowledge and the gift of representation, will have to be decided by those to whom the book is addressed; but that the heart had a share in it will, I hope, be felt by every reader. If, in addition, it should induce recollection of, and reverence for, the imperishable spirit of music, it will have realized its intention beyond all expectation.

RICHARD SPECHT.

VIENNA, *Autumn*, 1928.

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JOHANNES BRAHMS

PILGRIMAGE IN THE RHINELAND

THE young man who, in the August of 1853, came wandering down the valley of the Middle Rhine, looked at a first glance not unlike a travelling journeyman. With a knapsack on his back, a knotty stick in one hand and his cap in the other, dusty and hot, treading firmly and yet with the deliberation of one who is not quite certain of his ultimate goal and who again and again halts in tranquil delight, as if reluctant to leave the spot of earth he has just reached: so did this young man walk onward; continually jerking back his head with its long, sleek, fair hair, its pure forehead and flashing blue eyes; thrusting out the strong underlip of an energetic, decidedly masculine and austere mouth as if in scorn; from time to time humming softly to himself in an oddly growling and grumbling tone of voice, a little intoxicated, perhaps, by sun and wind and the cool vapours of the river. Whoever encountered him may at first have passed by unheeding; but a moment later he would be sure to stand still and watch the wanderer, from whose firmly self-assured figure, stocky and by no means gracious, but urged on by youthful and yet controlled strength, emanated something curiously fascinating and mysteriously predictive that was felt by the simplest and the dullest onlooker and seemed to communicate itself to him like a spark of pure heavenly fire. And he might say to himself, astonished and slightly puzzled: "That can be no fellow-tramp, no journeyman in search of work; that must be a travelling musician."

It was a musician, one who had left Göttingen and made for Bonn, there to visit the hallowed place where eighty years ago and more the greatest and most sorrowful of musical creators was born and spent his boyhood; after which he hoped to visit some fellow-artist or another. But what meant even more to

him was the Rhine with its sunny, green-golden vineyards, its castles and market townlets, and above all its native race, with whom he would sit over a cooling glass and whose songs he would absorb the while. He did not care whether he spent the night in the most primitive quarters or under the open sky, nor how homely the fare that was set before him, and the plain man in him drew him to the vintagers, the boatmen and the country folk, with whom he would gladly share a meal and in whose spontaneous songs, joyous and melancholy by turns, he would take his part, not without impressing them indelibly on his memory in order to transmute them later on into wondrous dream shapes. He must have felt a strange contrast on leaving these artless people and exchanging this bright riverscape, glowing and steaming in the glaring August sunshine, for the oppressive artifice confined within city walls, where instead of the raciness and the songs he had enjoyed with the ruggedly cheerful inhabitants of the river banks he was compelled to listen to professional musicians talking shop. This especially in the non-German household which he first entered. It was done in idle curiosity and without any particular purpose, which indeed would have revolted his youthfully independent nature that was from the beginning violently averse to all the tricks and diplomatic expedients of the musician's trade. But he would not disappoint the great violinist who was his enthusiastic friend and zealous promoter, and who had so urgently recommended this visit. Thus he went to see Wilhelm von Wasielewski, choral conductor and violin player, who wrote a book on *The Violin and its Masters* and who was later to become Robert Schumann's first biographer. The visit was to prove of greater importance to the young musician than he had at first imagined. Not that he took away with him any strong impressions or even enjoyed any fruitful discussions; but during his stay he resolved upon a course with whose execution he had so far merely played hesitatingly and with apprehension, a course which, once adopted, was to become the decisive event of his life.

Wasielewski himself, in his memoirs, tells us about this encounter. Towards the end of the summer of 1853, he says, he had the pleasure of being sought out by an attractive, fair-haired youth who presented Joseph Joachim's visiting card, at

the back of which was a humorous passport description of the newcomer. This was Johannes Brahms.

"His fresh, natural and unforced disposition awoke my sympathies," continues the patronizing host, "and I therefore asked him to remain a few days in my house, to which he assented without further ado. When we had been together a few hours, I naturally wished to become acquainted with my guest's musical side. He at once treated me to one of the still unpublished first-fruits of his art, a piano sonata, the nature of which immediately disclosed to me his considerable productive talent."

Questions as to the origin and previous life and activity of a youth who had worked at his development with an iron will, and in his merciless self-condemnation destroyed masses of compositions before he could bring himself to show a stranger one of his supposed "first-fruits," must have been repulsed by him with a quiet smile and a hasty gesture of embarrassment, that modest firmness and inaccessibility which was so often misinterpreted as churlish and even offensive arrogance and was in reality but chastity of the soul. At any rate, it needed a greater warmth to let the bud of his confidence expand. His host's benevolent condenscension was by no means calculated to coax confessions out of him and to dispel his reserve, which he maintained during the conversation that was to follow. Wasielewski endeavoured to persuade him to look up Robert Schumann and to submit him his works, not suspecting that his advice was superfluous, since Joseph Joachim had long been urging his friend to undertake the journey to Düsseldorf where Schumann himself, interested by the matchless violinist's enthusiastic reports, had for some time awaited the young composer's arrival in impatient suspense. But Johannes still hesitated. Not that he was afraid to submit to a master a number of works that passed muster before his own conscience, which was incorruptible and pitiless, though never free from doubts: he knew that he was subject to an elemental demonic behest, whose mystic compulsion he was bound to obey and of which it was incumbent on him to make himself worthy by a responsible, indubitable purity and perfection of his craft. He was sure of his high mission. His reluctance to make words over his creation speaks as much for his conscientious terror lest he should prove an inadequate tool of the ruling

spirit as for his mysterious subjection to the enrapturing and incomprehensible dictates of the creative hour. There were other reasons for his reserve, and only one of them he indicated to Wasielewski, a good-natured busybody and windbag whose readiness to offer protection unasked may have saved the young man from offering excessive confidences: Schumann, it seems, had visited Hamburg three years earlier and Brahms had submitted some compositions to his judgment; but the master had found no time to look at them or to receive him, and he therefore would not importune him again and risk a second rejection. Such scruples testify to the young musician's vulnerable pride and delicacy of soul. But his host soon succeeded in dispelling them by giving him to understand how many unknown scribblers and strummers are in the habit of besieging a famous artist during such a sojourn in a strange city and robbing him of every free minute which he would only too gladly give up to a promising talent; for he knew how Robert Schumann in particular took pleasure in furthering true gifts and with what goodwill he remained ever on the watch for a younger succession. In any case susceptibility must not be allowed to go so far as to let a merely accidental and by no means personal incident make his avoidance of one of the most lovable and loving tone-poets grow into a permanent aloofness. Did he succeed in persuading the obdurate youth? It is certain that on his departure the latter gratefully took with him a few lines addressed to Schumann, intended to secure him a good reception; but he left without telling his host what he had finally decided to do.

In truth he had come to no decision, which in fact he deferred again and again. What kept him from doing that which any other young artist would have impetuously undertaken was a feeling that he had not yet taken any intimate possession of Schumann's music. What he knew of it—and it was little more than the *Carnaval*—seemed to him too playful, for all its charm, to contain too much of small literary oddity and not enough great music, and he would have thought it dishonest to confront its composer with such feelings. Perhaps, however, it was none of all this that held him back. Perhaps it was an enigmatic, scarcely understood voice of warning which awoke in him the presentiment that an hour was approaching which must prove

decisive and fateful for the rest of his life, an experience that was to condition all the happiness and sorrow, all the light and darkness, all the jubilant exultation and overwhelming pain of his existence. Strange how long he defended himself against his destiny. Yet, like all the elect among humanity whose life is regulated by a higher plan, he too was to discover the uselessness of rebelling against preordination. He was to see it only too soon, at first to his indescribable delight, later to his tragic bliss and sorrow.

First of all he longed to resume his wanderings. He walked from Bonn to Mehlem, all unknowing that it did not depend on himself where he turned. And it is awe-inspiring to see destiny at work, to watch how it takes the young master by the hand and, step by step, counteracting each move on the part of blind chance, guides him towards his goal.

At Mehlem he pulled the bell at the door of a country house in order to ask the way to the villa of Kommerzienrat Deichmann of Cologne, a letter of recommendation to whose wife he had in his pocket. A lady opened the window and impatiently motioned away the dusty and heated wayfarer with his knapsack and rough stick, whom she evidently regarded as a begging vagabond. Upon his inquiry after Frau Deichmann, she pointed at the villa opposite, and there Wasielewski's introduction secured him the heartiest welcome. Brahms himself said that, had the lady proved to be Frau Deichmann herself he would not have entered her house after her rebuff. If so, perhaps the life of one of the greatest composers would have taken another turn. Fate again.

For it was in the Deichmann's house that Schumann's music became a life-experience for Brahms. The hour had struck and he was ready for it. Only now was he drawn into the magic circle traced with his songs, his fantasies for piano and his chamber music by the most poetical of all day-dreamers, the most passionate visionary, who lived in an intoxication of yearning through moonlit nights of magic. Only now was he ripe for this realm of wonders, and he entered it enchanted. The world of Eichendorff, of Jean Paul and of E. T. A. Hoffmann opened its portals for him and wholly captivated him. Florestan and

Eusebius, Kapellmeister Kreisler and all the Davidsbündler, who had their true being only in Robert Schumann's imagination, admitted the young man into their brotherhood: he felt transported to new spheres, gladdened by un hoped-for promises. And it is not in idle play that he henceforth calls himself for a long time to come "Johannes Kreisler the Younger." From this moment he is determined: his next path leads to Düsseldorf, to Robert Schumann.

But first there was to be much music and much fruitful reading in the hospitable house. Franz Wüllner, who later became the famous conductor of the Gürzenich concerts at Cologne and one of the most eloquent of Brahms's messengers, had much to tell, even after the master's death, of the fiery charm which the slender youth exercised on all these musicians, how his eyes flashed with energy and genius as he sat at the piano and played his wild and fantastic Sonata in F sharp minor, the mighty one in C major, which dreams so rapturously in its folksong-like *andante* and in the first and last movements so authoritatively claims the heritage of the Beethoven of the *Hammerclavier* Sonata, or stormed away in the woeful and impetuous Scherzo in E flat minor, or again played some of his songs, among which the passionately agitated *Liebestreu*, sung out of the fullness of the soul, seized everyone with a profound felicity. "We were all at once enraptured and moved to enthusiasm by his compositions."

Then came a short, happy intermezzo. The young composer, who both as man and as artist had taken all hearts by storm, since in those bright days he must have burned as perhaps never before with an unburdened joy of life and could radiate all that was glorious in his often uncommunicative and severe nature, was able to go on a walking tour through the loveliest valleys of the Rhineland with the three sons of the house. He was in the seventh heaven, unyoked, inebriated with the pleasure of being alive. In a letter written on board a steamer to his friend Joseph Joachim (dated September 22, 1853) he gives vent to his enthusiasm. But at the same time the fate theme of his life makes its first appearance: the conscientious fear, lightly felt at first, but later often to become tragically acute, that he may lose himself, if only in the unrestrained freedom of a few such happy days as he is now enjoying. In the midst of pleasure he

pulls himself together, for he has a mission to fulfil, and he knows it. The youth of twenty appears to feel it as an occasion for self-reproach that he has allowed himself such a long period—in truth but a few short weeks—of glad carelessness. This is what he writes in that letter: “I have had so many sublime, heavenly enjoyments that it would be presumptuous of me to wish to prolong them. I intend to leave Mehlem for Leipzig and to do all that is in my power to secure a great deal of work.” And he adds: “I dread that city! There is too glaring a difference between the Rhineland hills and the counters of Leipzig.” But even to his intimate friend he says not a word about Düsseldorf and Schumann.

A few days later he takes leave, and not with a light heart, from the circle of the people at Mehlem who have endeared themselves to him and among whom he found friends and adherents for life. And he does not go to Leipzig: he makes straightway for Düsseldorf. The warning voice is silenced by a yearning and hopeful one that calls aloud. At the end of September he enters the house of Robert Schumann.

“What am I to write to you about Schumann?” he asks his friend in the next letter. “Shall I break into panegyrics on his genius and his character, or shall I lament that mankind once again commits the great sin of in many ways misjudging and doing small honour to a good man and divine artist? And I myself, how long did I not commit this sin! Not until after my departure from Hamburg, during my sojourn at Mehlem, did I come to know and pay homage to the works of Schumann. I feel I ought to crave his pardon.” And before that: “Their—the Schumanns’—praise has made me feel so glad and strong that I hardly know how to wait for the time when at last I shall be able to work and to create undisturbed.”

... He was welcomed as one long awaited in suspense, not as a stranger scarcely known by name. Schumann, who had shortly before resigned his conductorship at Düsseldorf and taken refuge in his dreamy solitude and taciturnity, was nevertheless still on the watch for new talent that promised a future. Joachim’s enthusiastic letters had done too much to rouse his curiosity in the newcomer to let him receive Brahms as he would

have received any others who desired to have their capabilities attested by him. He had lived for the moment of this encounter. He himself had become lost to the world and now existed only in his love and his song, amid his children and at the side of his adored wife, Clara, a wondrously inspirited woman, a devoted mother and an exalted and pure artist. Over-sensitive as he was, he could not withstand the brutal baseness of official life. Defenceless against malice and envy and hostility, he had fled from all this into the serene peace of his household, an inwardly radiant man still, but more and more silent, attentive only to the voices of the invisible. He had ever been hallucinated by music, writing down interior sounds and the mysterious tones of the astral world as if from dictation—most strangely manifest in that “inner voice” of the *Humoreske*, but elsewhere too, in all sorts of hidden melodic secrecies. But now is this delicately impressionable somnambulist and day-blind searcher wholly absorbed in his inner contemplation: he appears to be ever accompanied by shapes visible to him alone, as if the worlds of the spirit were no longer closed to him. The fine, gentle dreamer’s head is bowed lower than before, as though he were listening in a tender ecstasy to the whisperings of some Ariel who sings him soft melodies. Ever chary of speech, he now scarcely says a word, and when he does it comes with difficulty and reluctance upon his lips; the lovingly anxious wife is often the only one who understands him, and she, greatly troubled, remains always near him and is content only when he sits quietly listening at table in the midst of his family. But his wonderfully rich spirituality has remained the same, even as his star-twinkling, unspeakably soulful music, which can still at times rush forth like a golden wellspring or wake from dream-tangles * to pious songs of early morning; * music whose storm-driven passion is now frequently softened to a tranquil exaltation. And he is as much as ever on the look-out for the conquering newcomer who is to prophesy a new dawn for music. Until ten years before he had proclaimed all the new talents in his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, often acclaiming them far beyond their deserts in his noble impatience to find the

* I refrain from rendering *Traumewirren* and *Gesänge der Frühe* as titles in order to save the author, if possible, from the charge of extravagance, committed for the sake of an ingenious phrase. No candid critic could fail to see in Schumann’s *Gesänge der Frühe* (Op. 133) a distressing proof of mental decline.—E.B.

right messenger at last. He had been the first in Germany to herald Hector Berlioz and Frédéric Chopin; but they were contemporaries and fellow-pathfinders, and he looked for the man of the future. He became silent at last, still expectant, however, in his certainty that one would appear whom he might welcome as the desired successor. Now he had arrived. And Schumann grew young and bright once more.

It must have been an unforgettable moment when young Johannes Brahms first stood before the tone-poet of romanticism, when the present and future of German music held hands. It is true that one likes to think of Schumann in the attitude in which Walther von der Vogelweide describes himself:—sitting with crossed legs on a stone by the edge of the woods, the cheek pensively resting in one hand, listening to far-off fairy tales. But now his moderately tall figure may well have become somewhat thickset, the pure, peaceful and childlike face with its long, parted hair, its handsome, fleshy nose, its full, sadly smiling mouth and its generous chin slightly inflated; but the loving, searching glance of the darkly veiled eyes, gleaming in grave longing, had remained as compelling as ever, and almost equally so the tender motion with which he drew the newcomer to him and, after a few words of hearty greeting, urged him to take his place at the piano. But no sooner have the first few bars of the C major Sonata resounded, these proud hits of mighty paws, where Beethoven's spirit proclaims itself in an entirely new embodiment, than Schumann leaps up, interrupts the astonished player and runs to the door with the exclamation: "Clara must hear that!" A few minutes later he returns with his wife and says to her: "Now, my dear Clara, you will hear music such as you have never heard before; and now, young man, play the piece from the beginning." And the young man is obliged to play for hours on end; the grand piano surges under his hands, giving forth sounds that seem to come from an invisible orchestra. He performs the two boldly grandiose, fantastic and headlong Sonatas, which Schumann at once calls "veiled symphonies," where music rebels and thunders, exults and sobs. "The moon rises stealthily" * and surreptitious love-songs arise.

* "*Verstohlen geht der Mond auf*," quoted from the folksong on which the slow movement of the Sonata in C major (Op. 1) is based.—E.B.

Then sudden recollection and a resolute plunge into the flood of life, into a freedom won at once by renunciation and by noble decision; for these final movements, which break out so vigorously, tell of one who already in his very first works is a stormer of heaven, a heaven that is to be almost constantly overcast. There is also that mighty Scherzo in E flat minor, with its echoes from the realms of the mountain king, its Heiling* mood with that darkling melodic heartbeat that is so wholly Brahms's own. And there are songs full of the expression of the pains of youth—and fuller of promise. Moreover, a whole series of works unknown to anybody to-day, for they have been lost or sacrificed to the destructive impulse of the severely self-critical Brahms:—a fantasy Trio, a violin Sonata, a string Quartet—a wealth of music that would have added to the world's joy. In spite of Schumann's urgent desire that they should appear in print, they were committed to the flames; only the violin Sonata, mysteriously lost, may equally mysteriously come to light again one day and tell tales of unmerciful self-discipline, of youth, hope, sorrow and yearning contemplation, of the confiding friendship of two young men made vocal in a dialogue between the keyboard of Brahms and the master-fiddle of Joachim.

The Schumanns were overwhelmed by a music which foamed with storm and stress and yet showed independence and a fine maturity, music still in the process of violent fermentation and yet already pressed into a precious wine; overwhelmed no less by the personality of its creator who so openly bore the sign of the elect upon his clear and finely spiritual brow; by his boyishness, his clear lad's voice, the tenor quality of which persisted into his old age, though it became somewhat rough and brittle; by the flashing blue fire of the astonishing large, frank eyes; by the long and recalcitrant fair hair and the strong, unsensual mouth with a thick underlip protruding in apparent scorn. A veritable impersonation of John the Evangelist. Robert, the master-musician, glowed with secret contentment: his fairest dream had come true. Infinitely kind and incapable of envy, he at once determined to let the world know about the appearance

* Hans Heiling, prince of the spirits of Earth. His story is still familiar to Germans chiefly through Eduard Devrient's libretto for Marschner's well-known Opera.—E.B.

of a musical Messiah in such a way that it should be constrained to listen. He did it in a manner that accorded well with his great heart and was at once a deep joy and a burden of responsibility for Brahms. But before everything, he was urged to share the Schumanns' meal, which he did in a confusion of happiness and emotion, and he found himself retained from day to day. He stayed gladly. From the first hour he felt entirely at home in a house where genius and affection dwelt together and across whose threshold no impure breath, no filth of the busy marketplace, no poisonous talk could pass, or was allowed to pass. For all his loving attachment to his own family this was his first true knowledge of home.

He had to promise to remain until fetched by Joachim, to whom Schumann at once addressed an enthusiastic letter, and that might be a matter of several weeks. With growing pleasure Schumann looked upon this pure and manly youth, whose soul knew no deceit and who had matured early through many serious and painful experiences; yet he was free from precocity and his fiery creative force, which accounted for hours of passionate brooding, could suddenly break out into mischievous and even unruly boyishness and drollery. The master saw in the god-sent child who had come to him and who approached in such vigorous modesty and unconscious greatness a mission scarcely as yet suspected by himself, an embodiment of all that which he had already renounced, without bitterness, but with sorrowful awareness. Here was the bringer of the glad and redeeming message of art which he himself had longed to bear. He beheld his successor, saw down to the bottom of his pure heart, and was fond of him. And his wife, Clara, stood by with a gracious smile, glad in the gladness of the man she loved and herself profoundly touched by the purity and the wholly inexperienced freshness of unspoilt youth. There stood a whole man, fully developed at twenty, who still had to learn many things that may come from without, but whose intuition had shaped and matured his inner world for him in advance. Within a few days, three chosen human beings came nearer to each other than most others do in the course of years. It is true that they had a common language, and the most eloquent at that—music, which is capable of giving expression and imparting truth beyond words. They played together

for hours every day, Johannes had to perform his works again and again, was asked to improvise, or went through old and new music with Clara. And he was made to talk about his wanderings, his friendship with Joachim, his visit to Liszt upon which he looked back with some discomfort, and above all about himself, his origin, his home and childhood, his schooling and development. Silent by nature and painfully reluctant to speak of his own person or even of his own work, already accustomed in his early years to decline to do so bluntly and refractorily, he lost his reserve in the presence of two understanding human beings who approached him with a generous warmheartedness and showed him the understanding of genius. He felt as if he were speaking to himself alone, as if he answered for himself to himself in disclosing his life to these two in all its outward narrowness and inner wealth and wonders.

II

F. A. E.

HE was born on May 7, 1833, in Hamburg; in the poor district, if that need be specifically stated in the case of a German musician. The house was situated in the so-called "Specksgang"—to-day all too proudly named "Speckstrasse"—and was known as the "Schlütershof." Its coloured panelling, its tiny white-curtained windows and its pointed gable gave it the appearance of a witch's great gingerbread house, gay outside, narrow and wretched within. But it was no black art that was practised inside.

The father, Johann Jacob, of Lower Saxon race, was in his own person of that straight-grown, gnarled and healthy humankind found on the soil of Holstein, and a musician of a type that may often of old have been found in the town-pipers' guilds. They did not particularly care whether they piped or fiddled, so long as they produced a good and not over-delicate sound, and so long as they had a well-filled tankard under their chair; and when they could play one instrument, they would quickly learn another. Old Brahms, too, at first played the buglehorn in the city militia and afterwards bowed the double bass in the Alster Orchestra. By dint of obstinate practising he got so far as to be admitted into the theatre band and, after many years of want and honourable struggle for existence, at last overcame the worst care for a modest daily bread. The mother, seventeen years older than her husband and hindered by a crippled foot from moving about freely, was a quiet, homely and indefatigably busy woman of a receptive disposition, a simple purity of heart and a soulful goodness, who locked away the hidden treasures of her being as carefully as her son. She always welcomed poetry and music with a kind of grateful reverence, knew instinctively how to tell the worthy from the worthless, and had a gift of assimilating what she cared for with eager delight and an astonishing power

of selection. Already advanced in years, she learnt the whole of Schiller by heart, and in the invention and execution of curiously charming silk embroideries she showed positive artistry. What she meant to her son, and how he mourned for her when she died at the age of seventy-six, speaks more strongly and impressively in its infinitely sorrowful love than any words could have done from the deeply affecting tones of the *German Requiem* and from the adagio of the horn Trio.

From the birth-hour of the future honorary citizen of Hamburg it was decided that he must become a musician. Not that Jacob Brahms had expected the good fortune to cradle a genius in his home. He merely wished to teach the boy his craft tolerably and to make him as early as possible into an assistant breadwinner. His ambition would have been completely satisfied if his "Hannes" had only become a reasonably good orchestral string or wind player, if possible a better one than he was himself, for he used to say that a clean note on the double bass was only a happy accident. If his son had got so far as to be able to keep himself, he would have asked for nothing more. He had little in him of the wonder-child's father and was therefore happily surprised, not to say startled, on finding that this pale, quiet child of his, almost before it could speak, appeared to be enchanted by music, listened with passionate attention and was especially enamoured of the sound of the piano. The little one was a dreamer and fond of play. One game in particular had a fascination for him which remained unimpaired in his manhood: tin-soldiering. As late as his twenty-second year he wrote to Clara Schumann, a little ashamed and greatly pleased, of a toy-shop where he had discovered beautiful soldiers and which he could not help passing again and again. At last he entered it to buy a jumping jack for Clara's baby and to have a good look at the admired regiments. "I found a capital fellow, who will probably amuse you too, and came away with a heart full of longing. I 'contemplated' again and found that I could not much longer sniff round the tempting broth without eating some of it. Now I have as splendid a battle as ever I wished to see, and a little tower into the bargain. I am quite happy about it. At Christmas I will set out my troops so beautifully at Düsseldorf that you will be perfectly delighted!" And at twenty-eight

he still got out his box and played secretly with his soldiers; even as an elderly man he could not refrain from arraying the battalions which two of his landlady's boys had been given for Christmas. (Maybe there is here a mysterious connexion with those columns of notes he knew how to set against each other with such masterly strategy and thus brought into a symbolic picture before his eyes.) But the little "Jehann" might be ever so deeply immersed in his military manœuvres—as soon as his father began to practise, he would leap up from his game and listen with burning cheeks. His parent was ready, since he must be so mad on the strumming-box and did not care for the respectable and more lucrative string and wind instruments, to teach him the notes of the scales on a friend's piano, for he had none himself and could afford none; but the boy stood at the window with his back turned to him and told him in a weary voice each note he struck, with such certainty that his father at first accused him of guessing at a venture and trying to hoax him. But he discovered with boundless astonishment that the little fellow knew the scales perfectly well and that the notation which he wished to teach him was in principle much the same as that which the six-year-old had invented for his own use. If an artistic gift of grace means that its recipient has written poetry, composed or painted on a desert island with tools invented and made for his own purpose, then was Johannes Brahms so graced from the first day of his life.

At the age of six he was sent to the primary school, which was afterwards exchanged for a higher-grade middle-class school. The classes were mixed; even at the scripture lessons Catholics, Protestants and Jews sat side by side, which may account for his undogmatic piety as well as for his contempt of intolerance in matters of faith. But the fine-feeling boy suffered cruelly under the officious sadism of spiteful school beadles, who continually surrendered the shy and sensitively ambitious boy to the derision of his comrades and jeeringly delighted in his tears when they had succeeded in wounding him to the soul. He hated lessons in French, perhaps only because his mother never ceased talking of the Napoleonic Wars and of the outrageous humiliations endured by the inhabitants of Hamburg during those years of hostile occupation. It was then that the proud patriotism and

the heroic Germanism awoke in him, a feeling that found grandiose expression in many of his works and most forcefully in the *Song of Triumph* written to commemorate the victory of German arms in 1870, a feeling that made of him the splendidly upright and inflexible "faithful Eckart" of German music and German character. Even so is his inner freedom and his independence of all ecclesiastical orthodoxy to be ascribed to an event of that time, an event which, by the way, shows the nine-year-old Johannes capable of astonishing independence and maturity of thought. The terrible fire of Hamburg vehemently shook his childlike belief in God; he revolted against an interpretation which would have it that the innocent and the just must suffer punishment for the transgressions of sinners; he was unable to understand a divinity whose judgment does not spare the very churches erected in its honour. He had recourse to the Bible; but if it allayed his doubts, they were too often stirred up again by mysteriously threatening and startling thoughts. Nevertheless, he could not relinquish it: he henceforth lived with it and in it. It is part of the plan which conditioned this artistic life, as it does every other, that one who had early attained to inner freedom and self-reliant faith should find in the Holy Scripture words of strength and promise which from the sacred choral works and the *German Requiem* down to the *Four Serious Songs* were to arise again to imperishable glory in his mightiest and most inspired music.

It was his father who gave him his first instruction in musical rudiments. But soon a kind fate, which only the dull-witted would call by the name of chance, led him to the ideal teacher. This was Otto Friedrich Willibald Cossel, one of those ardently devoted and disinterested artist's natures who cannot endure to make merchandise of their art and to be subject to the need imposed by life, which forces them to take money for that which for them is blessedness. This curious and enthusiastic man, who was prevented by a pulmonary complaint from appearing as a public performer, found full satisfaction in endowing the young, in his capacity of pedagogue, with all the best that he was able to produce in them, both musically and humanly. He would think himself overpaid by the miserable fees on which he was constrained to live, accept no more from the wealthiest than he did from the ordinarily well-to-do, and nothing at all from the

poor. The half-grown Johannes, whose genius unfolded itself with almost alarming rapidity, he preserved from any exploitation of a wonderful talent and above all from the vain and hollow allurements of superficial virtuosity. He fought like a tiger against the idea of an American tour to which a wily agent endeavoured to predispose the father, who was evidently not wholly disinclined, and he remained victorious. He likewise preserved the youth from all premature and harmful offers which began to be made as soon as the musical world of Hamburg became aware of his gifts. More than that, he made a sacrifice of his own devotion and renounced his greatest pupil in order to confide him to Eduard Marxsen, the most eminent teacher in the city. And that not only because this seemed to him the only means of confronting old Brahms, who after all appeared disposed to send his son into the world too soon, with just the personality whose severe dissuasions would be more impressive than his own, which might be misinterpreted as counsels of interest; but chiefly because he cared little for his own reputation as master and only for the demonically victorious genius of his disciple, whom he wished to see the right man lead into the right path. For in his excessive modesty he could not long maintain any confidence in himself before a pupil who, he felt, could no longer learn anything of importance from him.

His apprehensions, especially those concerning the enticements of outward honours and advantages, could clearly have their grounds only in the adolescent artist's environment. For the latter's personal attitude he need have had no fear. It is true that before long various offers came from publishers and concert organizations; but with the exception of one collaboration and two concerts of his own, at which he excited some astonishment, Johannes Brahms made no public appearance during these student years, and he withheld his compositions entirely save for a trio that was performed under the adopted name of Karl Würth. His conscientious earnestness made him require far more of himself than such preliminary attempts, and the respect in which he held his art prevented him from regarding them as anything more than experiments. He told in later years that his room was in those days papered from top to bottom with his own music, so that he had only to lie down in order to enjoy

all these songs and quartets, and how one day he tore them all off the walls and consigned them to the flames. "Better that I should take them down than another," he said playfully. And a whole packing case full of youthful works found its way to a neighbouring factory where, unmoved and remorseless, he watched them burn in the huge furnace. That publishers already courted him in those days is known from what he related in his Viennese period; but it may also be read in one of the later letters to Clara Schumann. He wonders whether he will decide to compose, and even to publish, further works, now that he has harmoniously completed the circle of his creations with his settings of folksongs, and continues with melancholy humour:—"But I know what good resolutions are and do not say them to myself aloud, but content myself with thinking them. Now I should like to be as wise after my sixtieth birthday as I was before the twentieth. In those days the Hamburg publishers could not by any means induce me to let them print anything of mine. Cranz vainly offered all the money that I had to earn so hard elsewhere. Why this was so it would be difficult to say plainly. In my sixties it ought to be high time to stop—even without any particular reason." His high-minded seriousness and his severe self-judgment were the same at the end of his life as in his youth.

It is here that he is above all worthy of admiration: he made nothing easy for himself, though it would have been possible for him. He would rather give wretchedly paid lessons and play dance music in taverns and sailors' haunts than surrender that which he could not answer for, however wondrously it might have been dreamed, however sincerely felt and honestly worked. In later times, when he was reproached with his wounding and boorish behaviour, he would reply with a shrug of his shoulders that in the years when others are taught sociable deportment, he would be compelled to play night after night in the commonest pot-houses, and that he could not learn manners there. Nevertheless, even there he worked at his own improvement. While he mechanically hammered away at the required dances on an ill-tuned and groaning piano, he would read in a volume of Eichendorff or Heine that was always to be found on the desk of his instrument; and he could hardly wait for the moment

that was to release him to write down what had come into his head during his absent-minded performance. In this singular manner, which testifies to an enormous power of mental elimination and concentration, he composed almost the whole of Heine's *Buch der Lieder*. And all this was afterwards used to stoke the furnace.

For the rest of his life Johannes Brahms kept his teachers in grateful remembrance; Cossel perhaps even more than Marxsen, who was just that kind of learned, painstaking and intolerant pedant needed by a fanciful, enthusiastic and almost excessively psychic talent. Brahms did not always speak appreciatively of him, calling him once the most inartistic musician in Hamburg, and another time rather contemptuously dismissing the idea that he had learnt much from this master (and in truth both instructors may have learnt more things of importance in their intercourse with this pupil than he did himself); but to the end of Marxsen's life Brahms continued to show him a respectful devotion, dedicating his dream-like, wonderful piano Concerto in B flat major to him, thus erecting a monument to his own apprenticeship, and on Marxsen's seventieth birthday fulfilling a secret and long-standing wish of his by having a set of 100 variations composed by him issued by his own publisher, N. Simrock. (One hundred, no less! and sufficiently wooden ones at that.) This is how genius renders thanks. But more touching is the reverent, almost tender affection with which he spoke of Cossel, to whom he sent new pupils when he himself was a finished master, whom he never forgot, and whose memory he felt to be "one of the worthiest and most sacred of his life." Neither did he give up his lessons under him when, at the age of ten, shortly after his first public appearance, he went to Marxsen. The sensible child, who by the way was for weeks on end in danger of his life at that time—the wheel of an omnibus had passed over the heedless young dreamer—felt instinctively that the salutary training of the new master, who would hear nothing of Schumann or Chopin and regarded only Bach and Beethoven, with perhaps Mendelssohn in the last resort, as worthy exemplars for the creative and emulative musician, was after all too exclusive and that it needed a complement which nobody could provide in so stimulating a manner as Cossel. The progress made by

Johannes at the piano and in theory was stupendous, though the virtuosity to which Marxsen would educate him remained entirely foreign to the youth who plunged into the innermost depths of music and interpreted like a second creator, entirely without personal vanity and concerned only with the spirit and the soul of the work he played. But the teacher's glad astonishment was not confined to the young pianist, whom he might perhaps have induced to cultivate an outwardly more brilliant bravura, had he not experienced a growing pleasure in, and amazement at, the visibly inspired creative power that clamoured more and more impetuously to come to light. He recognized from the first moment a mysterious force that was becoming manifest in his disciple and seemed to presage the advent of one of the very greatest. There was no mistaking the urge to soar upward freely, to give way without constraint to the wonder and the intoxication of ardent dreams, and to revel rhapsodically in an excess of feeling. Perhaps it was not without danger, for it might well lead to what was for Marxsen the hypertrophical and heated expression, the romantic fevers, the almost indecent extravagance of those accursed and shamelessly abandoned, yet somehow exciting and compelling "musicians of the future" like Wagner, Liszt and Berlioz, who aim at poetry and painting in tones instead of making music. But to this urge was opposed another that held it balanced: the love of restrained, organically developed form, of the equipoise of correlative thematic ideas, of the powerful significance that lies in the goldsmith's art of combining such ideas; and this gave confidence. In any case, the master was careful to curb imperceptibly all that seemed to him excessive and to consolidate carefully all that was steady. But he hardly dared to touch the mystery of this growing and unfolding, standing in deferential awe before the revelation of the spirit: the spirit of music, which had chosen for its vehicle an untouched boy's soul, innocent of cultural experience and tradition, a soul which scarcely suspected, much less understood, what emanated from it. Marxsen, however, suspected it, and when Mendelssohn died in 1847, in little Brahms's fourteenth year, he ventured to say to his friends: "A master of the art has gone; a greater arises in Brahms." That meant something, and it speaks for the teacher as much as for the pupil.

The latter by no means always sat in front of his piano, or rather in front of one belonging to the piano factories of Schröder or Heims, where he was allowed to practise—for he had none himself. Nor was he continually at the writing-desk, where he would compose all manner of things when he was not occupied with contrapuntal lessons or making copies of favourite works, as he did of the scores of Beethoven's third and fifth Symphonies and many others. He read much, poetry and prose, books of travel, and above all the Bible, to which he returned again and again. And all this in spite of the fatigue of badly, even miserably paid lessons and of his nights in the dancing bars, where he played indefatigably for a pittance. This seemed to him as little humiliating as the drudgery of the arrangements of works and fantasias on popular songs by others, which he made with the utmost conscientiousness for a beggarly reward (under the name of G. W. Marks: a "piece of Marxsen," as it were, and with all his dryness) and which laid the foundation for his later mastery in the transcription for two and four hands and for two pianos of his orchestral, choral and chamber works. In spite of all this strain and exertion, he took advantage of every free moment to live in the open air and to observe with delight the life of the city, the harbour, and nature. This habit he retained to his old age. From early childhood he felt an imperative need to roam through forests and meadows: there, and not there alone, he resembles Beethoven, for he may be said to have created only during his walks, from which he brought home his harvest as a farmer puts his corn into the barn. It only remained for him to write down what his mind had shaped into a finished whole on the way, and he could safely rely on his extraordinary memory, which never lost him anything and which would have made it possible for him, as he himself declared, to write down anew every one of his scores and many others, if by some misfortune they should have been lost. It was his passionate love of nature, by the way, which caused the flaw in his voice. At the time when his clear boyish soprano changed into a tenor, he spent a night in the woods, as he often did later, and the cold he caught permanently affected his voice, which remained brittle, rough and bright. In his daily intercourse he would force himself to speak in a tight, creaking bass and secretly underwent the

cruellest tortures of speech in order to screw an artificial manliness out of this recalcitrant organ of his—neither his first nor his only self-compulsion. But it availed him little: in unguarded or agitated moments the fragile boy's voice would come through just the same.

He was now twenty years of age. After the two concerts in the Spring of 1849 he had appeared before the public only as collaborator at functions organized by others. He worked without respite cultivating his powers, gave lessons, produced one work after another, and still remained ignorant of what he was and what he did. If anybody spoke of his great future, he would smile incredulously. The noble dissatisfaction of the artist who can never do enough to please himself was his to an almost painful degree, and the youth's earnest modesty survived in the man, who was well aware of what his work was worth and yet never freed himself of a gnawing doubt whether his music could truly enrich and give joy to the human race he held in such high regard. Already at that time he was utterly uncommunicative; yet, with all the chaste reticence and secrecy of his work, he laid bare his own mind by the eloquence of his music and by the poetry he chose to set. And in those days the fundamental trait of his being, a profound contradiction, was already in him: a teeth-grinding energy, a convulsive obstinacy in self-concealment, a violent wrestling for outward and inward independence, and an excessive sensitiveness of mind and conscience. The defiant melancholy that was to become one of his characteristics already began to declare itself in those early years. Not that it prevented a certain playfulness and a liking for harmlessly foolish pranks which endured until long after his salad days, though it became gradually converted into a crotchety humour that could be blunt enough on occasion, but was also capable of infinite delicacy. But he was at the age of twenty the same finished, self-reliant human being as at sixty, and as a creative musician too he could only grow more perfect, but not more highly endowed than he was in his youth.

An occurrence of that time, inconsiderable as it might have appeared at first, was again to prove fateful. A Hungarian violinist, Eduard Reményi, who with a few companions was making Hamburg unsafe, had heard young Brahms and suc-

ceeded in persuading him to undertake a concert tour with him. Whether he knew instinctively that here was a chance to associate with a genius or whether he merely hoped to pick up a cheap and trustworthy musical accompanist, who would at the same time serve for this or that solo number, he certainly felt the sacred flame and did not shrink from it. He was the devil's personal friend, a gipsy nature with all its rabid and fiercely burning temperament, its cunning exuberance, its barbarously over-peppered, flashing music and its persuasive falseness which was not to be resisted. He dazzled everyone with his recklessly fiddled improvisations, his highly seasoned performance of national tunes, and even with his impudent interpretations of the German masters, whose most soulful adagios he would convert into a *lassú* with all sorts of syncopated distortions and ornamented cadences. In spite of his arbitrary treatment and all his cayenne-peppered rhythms, there was something compelling about the elemental and impertinent surprise attacks of his manner. When he played what with his Hungarian accent he would call the *Kraitzzer Sonata* until his hair stood on end, even those who were revolted by such insolent distortions were unable to withstand his bubbling turbulence. Brahms welcomed this curious alliance. He was glad to be able to travel at last, to see strange places and to put his gifts to the test before unknown and entirely unconcerned people. Perhaps he was fascinated, too, by the exulting and sobbing, wildly quivering Hungarian melodies of his eccentric companion, which were later to rise to glory in the Hungarian Dances, in the *Zigeunerlieder*, and in many a chamber music movement. They left Hamburg on April 19, 1853, travelling, mostly on foot, to Hanover by way of Lüneburg and Hildesheim. Their music did not weigh heavy since they knew almost everything by heart, including a violin Sonata specially composed for Reményi the manuscript of which the over-careless composer left behind somewhere or other. It never reappeared and Brahms did not deem this work of his youth worth the trouble of writing down again, although masters like Schumann, Liszt and Joachim, who saw it, thought highly of it. It is not difficult to imagine that the two did not fail to indulge in all kinds of musical tricks and pranks such as Brahms was fond of all his life: they were young and happy, not willing

to let any mishap spoil their boisterous humour, and glad of their successes, as they had every right to be. The violinist was to realise one night what a colleague he had chosen when they came across a piano that had been tuned half a tone too low and Brahms, out of consideration for his partner, who did not wish to damp the brilliancy of his instrument by tuning it down, readily transposed Beethoven's C minor Sonata which, like everything else, he played from memory, to C sharp minor. In Hildesheim they gave a concert before rows of empty seats. Nothing daunted, they drank and sang in the company of a few members of the choral society. Brahms composed a part-song on the spot, it was sung through at once, whereupon the whole band went out into the clear night and sang the newly written piece as a serenade while Reményi played the fiddle. The following evening the concert hall could not hold all those who sought admittance.

More serious things happened at Hanover, where the rulings of providence became manifest. Reményi visited Joachim, who was already a violinist of universal fame, and took his companion with him. The Hungarian's theatrical fulsomeness repelled Joachim; he turned to Brahms, whom he had at first ignored, but who at once captivated him. The young man's austere beauty attracted him as much as his modest firmness and he begged him to sit down at the piano and let him know some of his music. Brahms played his mightily resounding Sonata in C major, the Scherzo in E flat minor, that sounds as if it came from Tartarus, and some songs. Joachim was beside himself. He felt, as never before, that he had communion with a spirit, stood disconcerted before the significance and maturity of a boy of twenty and his art, and was devoted to him from the first moment. A bond of friendship was tied which, in spite of many temporary strains, was to endure for a lifetime.

Joachim first of all arranged a concert for the two itinerant musicians before the King. Then he recommended Brahms to Liszt and invited him to pay him another visit at Göttingen. He wrote enthusiastic letters to friends concerning the young tone-poet, whom he calls "pure as a diamond, soft as snow," and whose gifts he felt to be far greater than those of any other musician of the same age. He parted with him in the firm

conviction that sooner or later, but very likely "sooner," he would leave his unequal partner. In that event, Joachim insisted, Brahms must return to him.

No wonder that Brahms was anxious to reach Weimar and to see Liszt. Thus the two went straight there. The misjudgment of that royal artist, Liszt, and of his great heart has woven its legends around this visit too. They culminated in suspicions that Liszt tried to capture the young genius and to win him over to the "music of the future." It is possible that some too zealous disciples may have endeavoured to do something of the sort or at least have thought a good deal about so welcome a reinforcement of the "party;" the master himself was far above any kind of faction, to say nothing of scheming tactics. The benefit of his endless and too often abused kindness was never intended for anything but personal talent, which he may often have overrated. He always supported others with the magnanimity that is only achieved by those who have themselves suffered much, and he was worlds removed from the machinations of his environment which, though mostly well-intentioned, probably contained one or two shady customers. He surely did not so much as suspect intrigues, from which he would have turned indignantly or contemptuously had they come to his ears. For it was thus that he treated all the malevolence he had to endure, for which he had only this calm and proud answer:—"What matter if they try to run down our cause, so long as we ourselves uphold it." That a shadow was sometimes cast over his noble figure by the grotesque and servile meddlesomeness of the male and female sycophants whom his forbearance tolerated around him, is but part of the tragedy that clouded the whole of his life in spite of all its intoxicating splendour.

He welcomed his countryman, whom he knew well, and the young unknown announced by Joachim, with the whole irresistible magic of his being, invited them to stay with him at the Altenburg, and received Brahms especially with an almost solemn affability which certainly did not deserve to be repayed by unwarrantable rudeness, which was unfortunately the case and which only Liszt, with his nobly understanding humanity, could forgive and even to all appearances condone. He invited a few of his friendly disciples, such as Joachim Raff, Mason, Klindworth and

Pruckner, taking it for granted that they too would be interested in making the acquaintance of a young man with a reputation for such exceptional creative and pianistic gifts, greeted the newcomer in his most winning manner and proposed after a short conversation to take Brahms at once to the piano. But the latter resisted: he was unable to play, confused and embarrassed before the unchallenged monarch of the pianistic realm, the magician of the keyboard, who could conjure up sounds of an unsuspected richness of colour and fantastic delicacy, ripples of effortless, glittering grace, thunderstorm crashes of immense force and plasticity and a veritable *vox humana* of melody such as none before or after him has known how to coax from the piano. And the appearance of the artist of forty-two, his tall aristocratic stature, his full, slightly greying hair that fell down to his shoulders, the audacious nose, the flashing eyes, the kindly and pain-proud mouth, the haggard cheeks with their numerous warts—strange, half-grotesque and half-demonic; all this may have contributed to the fact that Brahms, who as a rule at once lost his shyness when he was asked to play, seemed to be paralysed and unable to act upon the master's request. Liszt was evidently used to this kind of thing. He rose and took hold of one of Brahms's none too easily decipherable manuscripts, saying:—"Then I shall no doubt have to play myself." He went to the piano and read the E flat minor Scherzo and parts of the C major Sonata at sight with an intuitive certainty, a force of expression and a magnificence of tone which staggered Brahms and made him marvel at this comprehending and re-creating genius. He would long afterwards reply to doubting questioners:—"Of course we others too can play the piano, but we all of us only have a few fingers of his hands." Liszt too was greatly surprised and moved by the presage that was so clearly uttered by these youthful works; anxious to honour his guest and the "blessed of the Lord," he seated himself once more at the piano, this time to play one of his own works:—the just completed Sonata in B minor, the rhapsodic looseness of which throws together pompous vacuity, weighty pilings-up, glistening sentiment and thrilling greatness into an oddly unbalanced and contradictory, yet somehow unified effect. Liszt, who loved this work particularly, became lost in his own world and played

overwhelmingly. At an ostentatiously displayed passage he turned expectantly towards the hearer, wishing to read the impression made by his music on the innocent visage—only to find that he was fast and peacefully asleep. Liszt interrupted his performance and left the room without a word. He afterwards found excuses for the visitor's ill-bred behaviour: a night spent in travel, the excitement of the past hour, . . . maybe, too, that it was here a question of one of those very healthy but very susceptible and hyperæsthetic artist's constitutions who are often violently assailed and made defenceless by sleep. In short, he bore Brahms no malice and repeatedly urged him to stay on, distinguished him in every way, released him only after a visit of several weeks, made him a present of a handsome cigar case with an engraved dedication, and did not once allude to the awkward occurrence. Nevertheless, there is no excuse for it, for it is not a question here of which of the two was the greater musician. Here after all was a young man, as good as unknown, who came as an applicant, little though the word may fit Brahms and his unapproachable pride. On the other side there was the most illustrious artist of his time, the unapproachable master of his instrument, the most spoilt and beloved of all and the humanly worthiest into the bargain, a princely man in the truest sense of the term, who moreover had set the splendid example of giving up the honours and vanities of a glorious virtuoso career in order to fulfil a higher mission of art and to settle in the little town of Weimar to show as creator, as interpreter and as teacher how great music should be treated. No, when such a master did young Brahms the honour of playing to him, the latter simply had no business to go to sleep, however tired he may have been, even if Liszt had played him nothing more than the C major scale. He would have been confoundedly ready to keep awake if Liszt had continued to go through Brahms's pieces at the piano. Nothing can help us to get over that; it remains incomprehensible and unpardonable. For all that, this incident would not have been worth such a dissertation if it had not, according to all psychological probability, struck roots in Brahms which accounted for the aversion to Liszt that grew in him year by year and later on was to drive him to take one of the most fatal and questionable steps of his life. The

noblest natures, and particularly those who conceal great sensitiveness under a robust exterior, are capable of behaving in an unjust, even hostile, manner precisely towards those whom they have injured, even if only in thought. It seems likely that Brahms felt like this about Liszt. True, he always spoke with respect of Liszt as a human being; but the more he got to know of his music, the more intense became his abhorrence of it. He felt it to be hollow and factitious, even destructive in its tendencies and there he only exercised the right of strong creative personalities to defend themselves against all that is uncongenial to them. He may also have secretly looked with ever-diminishing sympathy upon Liszt as a man. It may be left to conjecture whether it was not he who, perhaps quite unwittingly and certainly in all good faith, confirmed Joachim in his growing doubts in his great friend, and whether he did not thus share in the manly but extremely wounding letter of refusal written by Joachim to Liszt, for which the latter revenged himself with nothing but a lasting and high-minded attachment and esteem. But the unaccustomed violence with which Brahms declined everything that came from Liszt remains significant.

Brahms did not feel at home in the master's circle at Weimar. He may have felt somewhat like Tannhäuser in the Venusberg. The whole atmosphere of the Altenburg and its partisans repelled him, and yet there was something enticing about it, something alive that enchanted him, something new and promising and intoxicating that held him, together with much that was unsound and theatrical from which he recoiled. He spoke daily of his intention to leave the next morning, and daily Liszt's bewitching humanity and artistry prevailed upon him to remain. Yet at last he tore himself away. It may be symptomatic that he was so fond of his later Cantata of *Rinaldo*: it may have been for him the image and parable of his sojourn on an enchanted island and of his enforced departure. At that moment the decisive motive of his life's destiny made itself felt once again:—the fear lest he should lose and destroy himself, a fear that assailed many others in that circle. He was afraid of losing his independence under softening influences and felt that it was high time to escape from a world where in spite of all there was much to attract him. All this probably did not become clear to him until much later.

Perhaps it was, incidentally, this Weimar experience which again made him waver in his intention to follow Joachim's advice and visit Schumann, whose music afterwards drove him so irresistibly to that master; he was no doubt afraid to fall once more into the magic circle of an Armida in the shape of a musician and to be enthralled by it as he was very nearly enthralled by that of Liszt. He was now more than ever on his guard and could not foresee that at Düsseldorf he was to find his true home and destiny.

With Reményi he had fallen out at Weimar: Joachim had been right. He kept his word with redoubled pleasure and made for Göttingen. Now that he was alone, he was able to become more intimate with the newly-won friend, to whom, as to no other, he felt humanly and artistically akin; intimate, that is, in a personal way, as he had already been spiritually since the day on which, five years earlier, he had heard the supreme violinist interpret Beethoven's Concerto with such majesty, so mightily hewn into shape and so wholly without vain virtuosity, that from that moment he knew his own path and the secret of true interpretative art. That he should now be allowed to come into personal contact with this fellow-artist, who was two years older than himself, appeared to him like the marvellous realisation of a dream-presentiment. After the sultry Weimar days, which had given him much, yet had inwardly confused him, he felt Joachim's unvarnished vigour and sturdy severity as a gratifying contrast.

Joachim had shortly before officiated at a performance of Beethoven's Concerto at the Nether-Rhenish Musical Festival, at which Schumann had conducted. In the hours of friendly intercourse that preceded and followed the concerts, Joachim as a matter of course told the master of Brahms's visit to him, which had made an indelible impression on him. In his unmeasured enthusiasm he designated Brahms as the legitimate heir of Beethoven. No wonder that Robert Schumann impatiently desired a meeting with the young genius, whom he had no recollection of having turned from his door in Hamburg three years before. Joachim now urgently exhorted his friend to seek out Schumann; but Brahms feared a second Weimar and would not again be found lacking in courtesy or honesty on having to listen to music that meant so little to him as Schumann's piano

works had so far done. Moreover, he was so happy to be able to play with Joachim, to take part in the student life of the old university town and even to give a joint concert with the prince of violinists that he did not care to think of too early a departure. The joyous unrestraint appealed to one who had never before been truly young, and the fresh, virile students' songs, which he heard with avidity again and again, were for him, who like Richard Wagner had recognized folksong as the pure source of all true music, a most fertile incitation. They were to find ennobled symphonic embodiment in one of the mature master's brightest and most entrancing works, the *Academic Festival Overture*. But the central attraction of this two months' sojourn was the friend who had chosen for the device of his life the tone symbol of F.A.E.:—"Free but lonesome." * That Joachim certainly was: a man of high-minded seriousness which was, it is true, attained by a complete renunciation of humour, relying upon himself in his moral strength and independence, striving only after the highest ideals, the most disinterested servant who ever laboured on behalf of music. A shining model indeed for the younger artist, and oddly enough as creative musician too, in which capacity he was strangely overrated by Brahms in those days, and not by Brahms alone. The dryness of his too often halting invention, the ponderous distinction of his workmanship, the joyless energy of expression to which the Overtures to *Hamlet*, to *Henry IV* and to *Demetrius* † as well as the violin Concertos and Variations testify, were mistaken for a greatness that lay more in his purpose and intention than in his inspiration. Here he was lonesome, but not free.

Brahms, however, who in this early summer of 1853 was in the happiest and most productive mood, adopted but half of his friend's motto. He took E as leading note, resolved the dissonance into the octave, and thus obtained his own heraldic sign of F.A.F.:—"Free but glad." ‡ Was it truly the fundamental motive of his life? The fundamental motive of his music it certainly became: the disposition of intervals according to the formula of tonic-third-octave was henceforth to dominate his thematic invention in a remarkable manner.

* "*Frei, aber einsam.*"

† Grimm's, not Schiller's.—E. B.

‡ "*Frei, aber froh.*"

Free but glad, he at last parted from the companion who had become dear to him, to wander for once to his heart's content. His speedy return he promised gratefully, but the question whether he would not after all visit Düsseldorf he answered with a hesitant shrug of the shoulder. No matter where the journey's end may be.

But now, at Mehlem, Robert Schumann's music, with all its dreamy inwardness and its rustling and gold-glistening fairy-tale romance captivates his young and sympathetic soul with an inexpressible magic power. And proud happiness mixed with fierce sorrow awaits him, now that after all he enters the master's house, fearfully and hopefully.

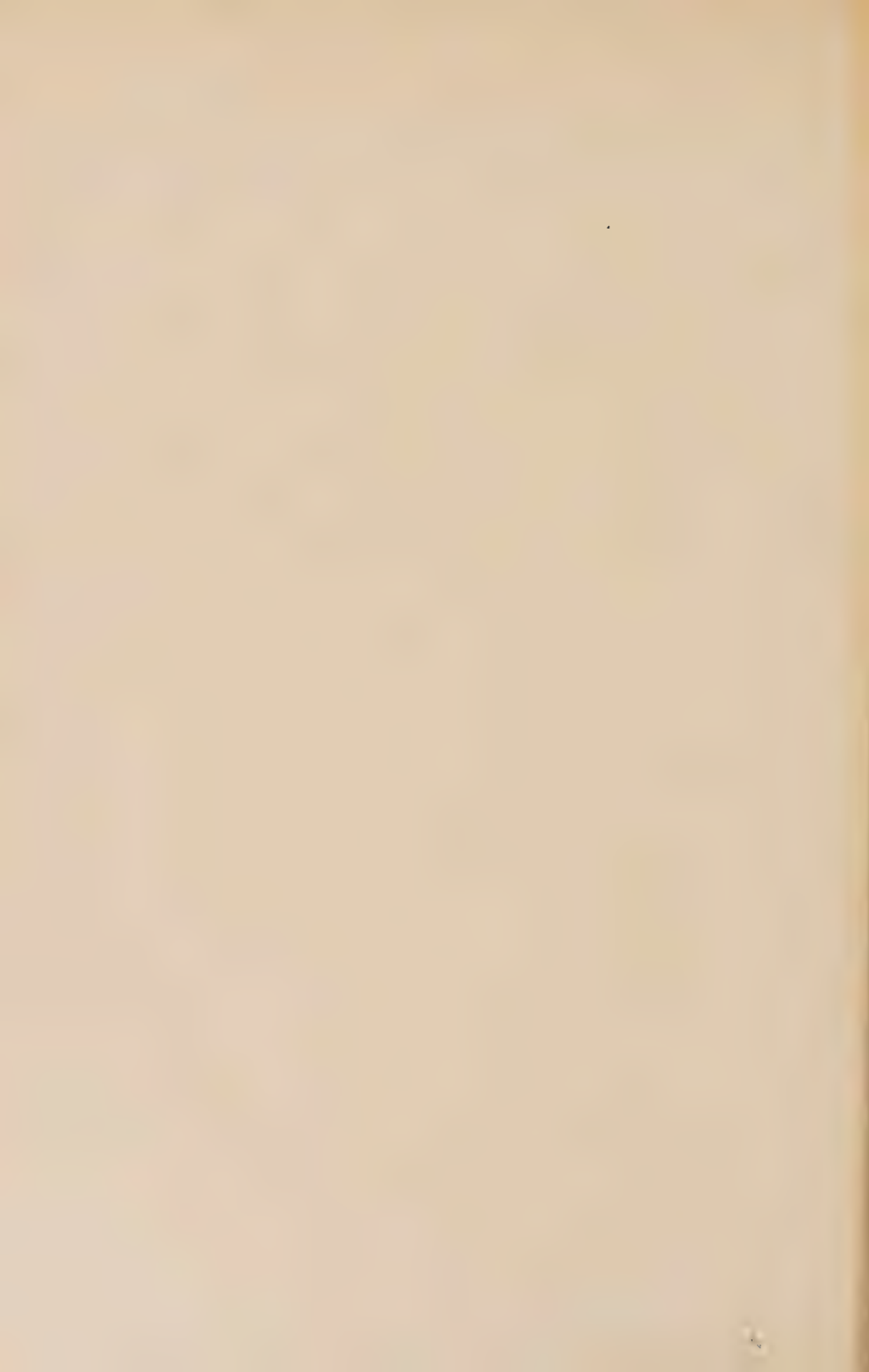
III

NEW PATHS

THEY are seated at the mid-day meal; the father of the house at the head of the table, silent and affable, now and again stroking the hair of his eldest daughter with an almost shy tenderness and turning with a quietly humorous word to the other six children, arrayed like organ pipes along the table. The mother, in the ripe grace of her thirty-four years, is just now only the attentive housewife. She knows nothing of the artist that she is at her beloved piano, has her kind eyes everywhere and above all lets them rest again and again on the young guest, whose untouched, childlike nature and helplessness seems in moments of music-making so wonderfully transformed into superior manliness and flaming genius, and who exercises a warming attraction to which she yields with dispassionate pleasure. She is so sure of her devoted love for her husband, who has won her with such difficulty and after such long and persistent waiting and wooing, and to whom she has borne seven children, that she feels proof against anything. Johannes follows with admiring glances her every gesture, so delicate and yet so purposeful. The peace and the spiritual purity of this utterly un-Bohemian household, whose almost commonplace atmosphere agrees so well with a very uncommon double artistry of a sparkling and free mentality and which demonstrates the absurdity of the notion that musicianship need necessarily be associated with slovenly gipsydom, enmeshes him with an indescribable cosiness and a comforting feeling of home. But in spite of all this, he feels impelled to go away by some inexplicable premonition for which he is unable to account to himself and which makes him restless. Besides, he is reluctant to obtrude himself. Having come for a day, he has allowed them to persuade him again and again to stay on, so that now he has lived every hour of the best part of a fortnight among



ROBERT AND CLARA SCHUMANN



those who, down to the youngest child, love him, where there is a great deal to hold him, and where he may yet not remain. Thus he speaks once again of departure.

But Schumann only shakes his head with a quiet smile and Clara admonishes him gently to cause her Robert no vexation. She reminds him that he has promised once and for all to await Joachim, who is due to play in Düsseldorf at the end of October and with whom he will afterwards leave. Until then he had better remain quietly and accommodate himself with as much good behaviour as he is capable of—for she must say that he sometimes works no little mischief with all sorts of mystifications and sudden peevishnesses. And if these bad humours are perhaps to be attributed to an evil conscience due to his excessively extended holidays, he would be well advised not to vent them on innocent people, but rather to take a good example from her husband, who could show him that even in Düsseldorf it was possible to work and compose quite profitably.

One reproach at least might have got home, though even that would not always have been just. It is true that Brahms was always ready to play harmless tricks on those around him or to organize amusing confusions; but what is certain is that Clara—not unlike Joachim in this respect, as in many others—could never in any sense of the term understand sport. She was exceedingly susceptible and devoid of humour, would often see a personal affront in a perfectly innocent jest, and this resentful disposition, which sometimes threatened to throw a shadow over her glorious capacity for love and her fine-feeling and abounding womanliness, was the occasion for misunderstandings without end between her and the great friend, who in truth died of her own death and who, in spite of his own later irritability and roughness, more than once prevented a complete breach by consideration and patience exercised in the remembrance of her sorrowful experiences and of what she had been to him. But there was need for this remembrance.

As for the other admonition, he could let it pass with an easy mind and leave it unanswered with a happy smile. For even in these days he had not been inactive, but had conceived one of his boldest, richest and most passionate works for the piano: the Sonata in F minor. Were it not for the knowledge that he

had already in Hamburg written down that lovely and world-removed andante, a nocturne quivering with modest longing, trembling with moonrays and saturated with the voices of night, with its splendidly fervent peroration which at first begins in a warm-hearted folkly tone and then foams up, self-oblivious, like a boiling well-spring, and that the disconsolate *Rückblick* too had an earlier origin, one would be inclined to take them, wrongly, for a silent, and for that very reason over-eloquent, confession in music. As it is, they must be regarded as premonitory. But there can be no doubt that the other movements express what the composer felt at that time without acknowledging it. The first movement with the jagged flashes and loud crashes of its principal theme, which continues to shake with distant summer lightning and growling thunder, with its impatient second subject, sung out of an oppressed heart, driven on and held back by syncopation, and the broad exhalation of its darkly magnificent climax; then the scherzo, which plucks the strings with such grim impetuosity and in its trio sings out so much consolation and tranquil composure; and again the finale, opening with a kind of sullen resolution and afterwards brightened by day-songs of courage and confidence, which again and again seems to wrestle for a determination to live, but whose precipitate and jubilant conclusion has something of a reckless fatality;—all this is informative and belongs to the most stirring things in Brahms's piano music. Gustav Mahler once maintained that the tone-poet, in the elevation of his inspired hour, often shaped experiences in advance which on the plane of everyday existence only happened afterwards, and that he thus flung a brazen challenge at fate. Those who listen to Brahms's F minor Sonata with more than the physical ear will of a sudden come to understand this dictum.

Schumann himself had other reasons to give why he wished to persuade the "young eagle"—as he liked to call him—to remain. He asked him to consider that it would be necessary to come at last to a conclusion about the works which he was now to help Brahms to have published by Breitkopf & Härtel, and also about the order in which they were to appear. Schumann thought it advisable to begin with the weaker compositions and so to give an impression of progress. Brahms, ever doubtful

of himself, was uncertain whether the Fantasy Trio and the violin Sonata were at all worthy of becoming public property. In a letter to Joachim he agrees with Schumann in principle, but not without this proud and responsible addition:—" Either I begin with them or I leave them out altogether and endeavour afterwards not to fall short of them." Another time he expresses it rather more bluntly:—" One must show the head first, not the —the foot." And he kept to his precept.

For all that, they could not come to any conclusion for a long time. Every day new suggestions were made and other combinations considered. It may be that the waggish Schumann only pretended to waver all this time in order to be able to keep his favourite the longer and the more certainly; in any case, he proposed a diversion that was entirely to the younger man's taste. They were to compose a violin Sonata in collaboration with a young musical friend, Albert Dietrich, as a surprise for Joachim on his arrival in Düsseldorf. The themes were to be cut to the sequence of F.A.E. and developed accordingly, and they would derive threefold amusement from the task:—the joint labour, Joachim's pleasure, and his embarrassment, for he would have to guess the author of each movement. Thus originated the " F.A.E." Sonata, in the dedication of which the order of the letters was reversed:—" In Expectation of the Arrival of an honoured and beloved Friend." Dietrich wrote the first movement, Brahms the scherzo and Schumann the intermezzo and finale, but Joachim cheated the expectant scoffers of their malicious pleasure by naming each composer without a moment's hesitation. This occasional work remained unpublished; only the scherzo was brought out after the death of Brahms, though it had reappeared earlier in a new form as part of a work that had a close spiritual connexion with the period in question: the piano Quartet in C minor.

Meanwhile Schumann was eagerly busy on behalf of his young friend without telling him a word about it. He wrote an article that was to proclaim the new genius who had fallen from the sky, to be published in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, founded by Schumann himself and edited by him until ten years before. He communicated with the old-established and famous publishing firm of Breitkopf & Härtel with a view to inducing them to

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accept some of Brahms's works, but did not at once disclose the name of him for whom he cared like a father. He merely said:—"A young man has made his appearance here who has touched us profoundly with his wondrous music and . . . who will make the greatest possible stir in the musical world. I shall take an early opportunity to let you have more precise particulars." And the publishers proved ready to respect so weighty a recommendation as it deserved.

But in the meantime the master had also devised an entertainment for his favourite's leisure hours that was not without its dangers. He made him take part in various *séances* and especially in the experiments of table-rapping which try to establish contact with the fourth dimension. Brahms, who all his life remained a stranger to occult things and opposed to them with a mistrustful and ironical aversion, was here most forcibly struck by the very ordinary phenomena he encountered. He was so inflamed by the supposed recognitions and disclosures gained in these hours that he dismissed those who ventured to doubt or even to ridicule his discoveries with all the rudeness he had at his disposal, which seems to have meant a good deal even at that time. Brahms could not be lastingly endangered by his preoccupation with all this mystery, which as a rule is seen afterwards to have been entirely natural or the result of self-delusion; his mind was so sound, his outlook so bright and clear, and he was so firmly rooted in life and everyday things, that no belief in transcendental ghost stories could for long subsist in him. He was not the man for metaphysical speculations and philosophical fancies, much less for charlatanries. With Schumann it was another matter. The very serious attention he gave to spiritualistic manifestations and other supernatural problems was in his case not only a sign of temporarily shaken nerves: it heralded the coming disaster. He had become a visionary through and through, lived under the delusion of having converse with higher powers and receiving messages from them. A beautiful theme of heavenly purity which he had written down one morning he declared with unshakable conviction to have been sung and presented to him by Franz Schubert in an hour of dreams. (It is that on which Clara Schumann, and later Brahms too, wrote such affecting variations.) He would sit for hours in a dumb

and blissful oblivion, his glance turned ecstatically inwards, now and again inclining his gentle head as if in answer to the unseen. That Monday early in 1854 threw its dark shadow before it.

The time came for the friends to part. Joachim returned to Hanover on October 30, and Brahms followed him on November 3, not without arranging a new meeting with the Schumanns in the near future. By this time the master's essay, entitled 'Neue Bahnen,' had appeared in the *Zeitschrift* and made an enormous but not altogether agreeable impression. It is universally known and has been relegated to the appendix * for those who wish to read it word for word. A wonderful document, testifying to the overwhelming power with which young Johannes Brahms and his music swayed the elect, testifying above all to the qualities of Schumann himself, his readiness to give his affection, his enthusiasm unimpaired by age, his command of language when it was a question of standing up for what he had recognized as greatness, his glowing directness that looks neither right nor left and knows no qualifying, and the glorious inexperience he had retained, which made him incapable of imagining the possibility of ill-will or hostility in others. For it must be said that, splendid as this article is, where he takes up the pen for the first and last time after a decade of silence and where his eloquence gives his words almost the character of a proclamation, of a last appeal to every true musician, it is as undiplomatic as possible. Schumann wished, as he told Brahms's father in a letter a few weeks later, to make the first entry into the world easier for Johannes. What he did was to make it more difficult. High-minded and sincere as his intention was, and sensational as the effect of this trumpet flourish sounded by the noblest of heralds had proved, it nevertheless was not attended, and could not be, by the desired result. The answer was a great howl, though little of it was audible to the world at large. Those who had been named as the precursors of the new saviour and were thus calmly pushed back into the second rank, must have become embittered towards him from the very beginning, to say nothing of those who had remained unnamed. That among the latter were Wagner and Liszt gave the whole thing the character of a surreptitious polemic, of an endeavour to play off an unknown

* See p. 361.

composer against greatly admired and much-discussed musical personalities, whom one might combat, but whose existence could no longer be ignored or tacitly denied. It was a manifest injustice, and that it was a fatal mistake into the bargain was to become evident before long. But more than that: this flaming annunciation was bound to arouse expectations so immense that the mature Beethoven himself could scarcely have done justice to them, at least not for those who already maliciously lay in wait for the first miracles performed by the new Messiah and who, like Hans von Bülow among them, remembered that in earlier years Schumann had more than once rendered his criticism worthless by exaggerated valuations of mediocrities. The master's act of friendship laid a heavy load of responsibility upon the young tone-poet's soul, and the latter knew how much it would need to fulfil Schumann's prophecy and to remain on the level assigned to him. An unfinished musician would have broken down under such a burden; for Brahms it was an exhortation to strain every nerve in producing the best that was in him. But even he could not know whether he would not succumb, and he must often have felt not a little apprehensive.

All this must have troubled his head and his heart when he returned to Joachim at Hanover and there read Schumann's article. Else it would be hardly explicable that only a few weeks later did he find words of gratitude, for which the master had long been waiting with some bewilderment and affectionate censure of his dilatoriness. With what unsparing energy Brahms held his promise to prove worthy of his great friend and not to disgrace him may be judged from his decision to act against Schumann's advice and to refrain from publishing the Fantasy Trio and the string Quartet. Instead he decided to begin with the youthfully proud works which are the first he felt able to acknowledge fully: the piano Sonatas in C major and F sharp minor. Quickly resolved, he destroyed the two compositions Schumann had thought strong enough to follow any work worthily. Thus he avoided any temptation to descend, by the publication of works that did not entirely convince him, below the plane he had once reached. In this dignified sense of responsibility and anxiety to keep his mission stainless he remains a great example for all time and is a particularly salutary one for our own.

He still hesitated to act upon Schumann's express desire that he should go to Leipzig and there introduce his music to the publishers in person. "Otherwise they will mutilate his works," the master urges in a letter to Joachim, "... it seems of the utmost importance to me." But for the moment he was too happy at Hanover to go in quest of the hated market-place of Leipzig. He composed, entered other people's ideas in a pocket-book he called the "treasury of young Johannes Kreisler," which in the course of years was to become a veritable spiritual self-portrait, discussed with Joachim which of his works should be first considered for publication, and the two friends worried their heads over problems of musical theory. And then Bettina von Arnim was there, the friend of Goethe and Beethoven, still so percipient and capriciously engaging that he took great delight in the company of this whimsical woman of genius. His admiration for her found expression in the dedication of his first book of songs to her. The other first-fruits too were destined to bear names dear to him:—the C major Sonata was inscribed to Joachim, that in F sharp minor to Clara. A dedication to Schumann himself he still seemed reluctant to risk, perhaps because he thought none of the works good enough, perhaps because his modesty made him feel that even the other dedications were presumptuous. "When all is said and done, it seems hardly becoming to affix such names to early works," he writes faint-heartedly to Joachim. "I shall probably leave it after all."

In the end he was obliged to force himself to undertake the journey to Leipzig, which he did as unwillingly as possible. He left Hanover on November 17 and wrote three days later in a condition of mild rapture that he had been received with "much love and friendship" in a city he had supposed to be intent only on trade and money.* Schumann's article appeared at first to have done wonders. Enmity as yet kept out of sight and everybody was ready to gaze in wonder at the object of the prophecy. The publishers crowded round him. Breitkopf & Härtel took the two piano Sonatas, a book of songs and the Scherzo, paying the sum of 40 louis d'or, a not inconsiderable fee for an unknown

* The author uses Pagner's "*Schacher und Geld*" in Wagner's *Mastersingers*.—E.B.

beginner. The honourable old house of Bartholf Senff also wished to take a share in his young glory and asked for something to publish, Brahms offering songs and the mysteriously lost violin Sonata, of which curiously enough more was to be heard later. Senff was afterwards given the defiant, musing F minor piano Sonata in default of a work which may yet one day be discovered in some old granary or in the possession of a secretive owner. Brahms returned to Hanover for a week, for he had various arrangements to make and was eager to tell his friend verbally how much that was good and encouraging had happened to him. But he immediately went back to Leipzig and found his second visit perhaps even more pleasant. He now made the acquaintance of Moscheles, the great pianist and composer of classical keyboard studies, who was able to give him personal recollections of Beethoven; also of Friedrich Wieck, Clara Schumann's father, an eminent teacher and an oddly freakish man of almost oppressive rectitude. At a chamber music evening given by the famous leader of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, Ferdinand David, he played his C major Sonata, not without stage fright, but with solemn approbation and marks of honour from a public that was to hiss him shortly afterwards. At the moment he stood in the full radiance of his first glory and was almost dazed, as one who suddenly steps into the bright light out of a darkened room. He was the man of the day: Liszt was there, returned his visit and distinguished him in every possible way; Berlioz, delighted with his work and his performance, embraced and kissed him before the whole assembly and wrote with overflowing warmth to Joachim, though with the prophetic addition:—" *Il souffrira beaucoup.*" He was to prove right.

Just then, however, Johannes bathed in a flood of joy and homage that made life worth living. Young musicians attached themselves to him and one of them, Heinrich von Sahr, who was wealthy and a capitally enthusiastic fellow, dragged him away from his hotel into his own lodgings, where he stayed on as a spoilt guest. With another he at once tied a bond of sympathy that was to last for life. This was Julius Otto Grimm, later called "Isegrim"* or merely "Ise," his "best and dearest friend in Leipzig, of a fresh, merry and healthy nature," a musician

* Isengrim, the wolf in the beast epic of *Reynard the Fox*.—E.B.

without genius, but sturdy and genuine, of good German stock. Then there was Peter Cornelius, with whom he was to come into closer contact in his Viennese period, one of the most lovable figures, both as poet and as composer, in his clear tenderness, noble warmth of feeling and gracious, quiet humour. Brahms saw in their company the first performance of a remarkable drama that profoundly seized him with its natural strength and sincerity. It was Otto Ludwig's *Erbförster*. He even ventured into the den of a lion who, it is true, were better designated by another little animal's name: Franz Brendel, the editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* which had published that article of 'Neue Bahnen.' He was the standard-bearer of the new music which for him was embodied in Wagner and Liszt, and for which he may have seen in Brahms another shining hope. But those who wished to see in the dream-winged, nervously energetic music of this young master, which seemed filled with echoes from Eichendorff, ecstasies of Jean Paul and romances of Tieck, a poetically kindred soul and thus tried to woo him secretly or openly, were mistaken. The unselfish Liszt himself, who cared only for the pleasure of having a full-blooded musician near him, was obliged to renounce that pleasure. The whole of Brahms's disposition was against his belonging to any party—even his own. He remained a man who stood alone, and only so could he become a man for all mankind.

Notwithstanding all the happy experiences of these Leipzig days, irradiated with the bright glow of first fame, he was anxious to leave. He wished to spend Christmas at home with his people, whom he had not seen since the spring, and afterwards to return to Hanover, where he desired to set to work near the friend to whom he "owed everything." A new composition was impetuously clamouring for completion, and one of his most youthfully prodigal at that: the Trio in B major, which reveals the whole twenty-year-old Brahms with all his inner stress, his fullness of heart, his ardent longing; all the apprehension, pride, restraint and expectation of a soul in flower.

It must have been a peculiar happiness for him and his parents when the returned wanderer sat with them under the Christmas tree. Some nine months ago he had gone away as a poor and unknown accompanist; now he came back as a famous composer

who had won the affection of great masters like Schumann, Liszt and Joachim, and brought with him a pile of beautifully printed works of his own and a purseful of gold. Old Brahms, who would rudely tackle his conductor when the latter asked him to play softly:—"This is my own double bass and I may play as loudly on it as I please!" and was not on any occasion exactly tongue-tied, now stood before his celebrated son in an almost meek felicity. With moist eyes and in unbelieving joy did he and his silent, warm-hearted wife look upon their boy. They had already been sufficiently pleased to find that he appeared to grow into a sound and useful musician, hardly daring to put faith in the high-sounding promises of his teachers; and now he was really to be one of the very greatest. But it must be true, for the master, Robert Schumann, himself had told his father so in a letter.

"Hannes" took pleasure in his people's delight and was happy. "My parents, my teachers and myself are in the seventh heaven," he wrote to Joachim, "and I can only wish that you spent the festivities as gloriously as we." And to the Schumanns too he addressed overflowing words of thanks. It was the happiest of Christmas seasons for him, and destined to remain the happiest for a long time to come.

IV

TRAGEDY

THE happy idleness of the family circle was not to hold him long. He had already spent too much time away from real work and his fiery spirit longed for new labour: the B major Trio now imperatively called for completion. Already at the beginning of the new year the busy worker found himself once more in the "Hanoverian hermitage." Not that his life there was so very secluded. Heinrich Marschner, with whom, to be sure, he did not come into close touch, conducted the Opera; Hans von Bülow visited the city and Brahms was able to thank him for having been the first to venture, nearly a year ago, to play a piece of his in public—or rather a piece of a piece: the first movement of the C major Sonata. Years later, long after Bülow had become his passionate apostle, Brahms remembered the circumstance with emotion and held it "in the heart's memory:"—"The sonata had not yet appeared, but you obtained a proof copy and played it by heart." Not that this was a remarkable feat for Bülow, who had a phenomenal memory and often performed a work by heart in the evening which he had read through for the first time during a railway journey on the same day, without an opportunity to try it over first on the piano.

While Brahms was in the midst of working at the Trio and plunged deep in musical debates with Joachim, a message of joy arrived: the Schumanns announced their visit. Mynheer Dominus—as the young people liked to call Schumann—came to Hanover with his Domina, who was due to play there, in order to spend a week among his friends. Immediately after his arrival he had the pleasure of hearing his D minor Symphony conducted by Joachim, who also played magnificently the Fantasia for violin and orchestra which the composer had dedicated to him. Schumann was as happily communicative as

perhaps ever before, and as Clara had an immense success, the eve of departure was nothing if not festive. Champagne, which Schumann called "the latchkey" because it kept up the company long after closing-time, flowed in rivers, and Schumann was in high spirits. The honours which had been heaped on him and his wife in Holland shortly before were a double satisfaction for him after all the wounding slights he had suffered in Düsseldorf, and their effect remained now that he was in the company of the three people for whom he cared above all others. He told many amusing anecdotes of his musician's life, was contagiously cheerful and affectionate, and there was only mirth and wellbeing until the time came for parting and for the couple to take the train to Düsseldorf.

Exactly a month later terrible news reached the dismayed friends. Schumann had thrown himself into the Rhine, had been saved and at the end of a few days spent either in raving delirium or in terrifying insensibility, was taken to an establishment for the treatment of nervous affections at Eendenich near Bonn. During the days immediately preceding the catastrophe he had been even more taciturn than usual and the auditive hallucinations which gave him the illusion of listening to the voices of spirits had returned in an aggravated form. His alarmed wife had scarcely dared to leave him alone for an instant. But on that morning—it was February 27—she felt reassured and thought that she might resume her usual duties. She left him at his writing-desk, clad in a dressing-gown, with slippers on his feet, and it was not to be supposed that he would leave the house in this garb. But when she returned to look after him, he had disappeared. As if he had heard the call of an unknown being whom he must obey, he rose in the middle of his work at the variations on the theme he imagined to be the gift of Schubert, crept to the door, gained the open, and walked towards the Rhine bridge like a somnambulist. The toll collector stopped him. He discovered that he had no money, gave the man his silk muffler as a pledge for the penny or two asked for, ran on the bridge and leapt over the parapet into the river. The crew of a Rhine steamer rescued him from the water and he was taken home in a carriage. It was a picture of grotesque horror, a Goya-like capriccio of sinister, fantastic unreality, for the streets

were full of carnival processions; Harlequins and Columbines and other gaudily decked-out people in fancy dress swarmed round the vehicle which carried the benighted master home for the last time. The doctor who was called in, Dr. Hasenclever, succeeded in calming the patient, who wavered between fits of wild frenzy and total apathy, and he was sufficiently energetic and circumspect to keep the horrified Clara out of the way. And the poor woman, indeed, was hopeful—the word is like a taunt in a case of such utter hopelessness. Four days later the asylum received the incurable Schumann. He never left it alive.

All these details were but gradually communicated to the friends. As soon as he received news of the disaster, Brahms left everything and went to Düsseldorf to assist the cruelly tried woman, who preserved the whole strength of her soul and feminine dignity in this catastrophe, which she could not have done without the delicate and indefatigably helpful care of her young friend. Without him she would have broken down. The "Domina" now became in truth the dominant of his life. All else was thrust into the background and only one thing mattered, to see her through this dire affliction and to preserve her for her children and her art. The thought of sending for his sister in Hamburg for assistance he considered and reconsidered, only to give it up in the end, though not before he had made the excuse, in a letter to Joachim, that Elise was in need of travel and change. Thus he redoubled his own energy—and needed it. Again and again he had to ward off a crowd of unwelcome comforters and bigoted pietists, who visited the distressed woman with all sorts of tracts and remedies of grace, and Clara would have come near seeing in her tribulations a punishment of Heaven and letting herself drive into religious penance and expiation, had not Johannes interfered vigorously and delivered her with hard words from the tiresome callers who pestered her and the senseless paroxysms which threatened her mind. He seriously feared for her reason at that time and was entitled to take credit for saving her from lasting derangement. "I believe that she would have gone mad if I, little man that I was, had not been near her, the only male among all those females who talked this nonsense out of her"—thus he is said to have spoken in later years.

It would indeed not have been surprising if the unhappy woman, who in addition to everything else was in a state of advanced pregnancy, had been injured in body and mind during these months of continual uncertainty between re-awakening confidence and hopeless despair. She was not allowed to excite the beloved patient by her visits, but had to keep away from him and did not see him again until shortly before his death. Thus her frame of mind and that of her household depended wholly upon the reports from Endenich, which at first kept a reassuring tone. A condition of gentle unconsciousness, broken by lucid hours, had superseded the violent outbreaks of rage against the keepers that had occurred at first; walks, during which the master plucked flowers, seemed to have a beneficial effect; his oppressive silence had given way to a tranquil docility and his looks and bodily state of health were satisfactory. Then again came phases of complete lethargy, of meaningless muttering and quiet delirium, broken by surprising days which to the doctor's experienced eye alone were not deceptive, but concerning which Clara was kept informed in a purely positive sense; days on which memory revived, on which he sent greetings and flowers to his loved ones and on which even the desire to work seemed to return: he asked for music paper and was left to do as he liked with it. His curious love for atlases, which had already been observed in Schumann earlier, also showed itself again. He could sit for hours in front of maps and dream over them, and when he asked for books of this kind, Brahms procured him the largest and finest atlas he was able to hunt up. And there was great joy when one day—though not till months later, in the autumn—he wrote affectionate and entirely rational letters to his adored wife and to Johannes, whom he cared for like a son and almost humbly admired. Truly, there was need for a little sunshine and hope in a house full of children and yet deserted, for Clara, in spite of her condition, was obliged to work, to care for the flock of little ones and to find money to pay the asylum fees, a task she was able to fulfil only so long as her despair was occasionally broken by a ray that would light up her Calvary with at least a gleam of apparent recovery and reunion. Johannes and her music gave her strength, and for the most part the two were the same for her, especially when they played through his

works together. She herself expressed at the end of her life what he meant to her at that time. Without him she could not have continued to live.

Within him, however, who placed himself at the disposal of his friend and master's wife in all the austere vitality of his youth and with all his grateful soul, there was restlessness and anguish of conscience. He banished the voices that whispered jeeringly that the motives of this self-sacrificing devotion were no longer the same as before, and felt that something had been awakened in him, partaking both of torture and of bliss, from which he was obliged to hide his own thoughts and which grew progressively into an inner conflict of whose origin he could not much longer remain in ignorance. The music that broke from him eruptively and in never-ceasing fulness that year betrays his agitated state of mind, which may be told as much from the swelling of a passion saturated with pain that rears itself up in his surging and blazing thematic ideas as from its forcible stifling into constrained and only apparently tranquil song. Here already we encounter a symptom that is exceedingly characteristic of the later Brahms: in the midst of all his revelling and often unmeasured profusion we are struck by a sudden chilling of the fierily flowing mixture of bell-metal; sometimes, too, by a stubborn entanglement of structure or by a benumbed stiffness, as at the sight of a ghost. He actually did at times fancy in those days that he was seeing apparitions. He seems almost beside himself in a letter to Joachim, written evidently after a *séance* with some hypnotic medium:—"We saw such incomprehensible things that we grew quite pale. There were people compelled to move according to the will of others, pens that wrote down our most secret thoughts . . . I am eager to know the impression such magic makes on you." Either he found Joachim not the man for such things or quickly became disillusioned in some other way: in any case nothing more is heard of them thereafter. But that they should have been capable of disturbing and exciting him to such an extent, that he should have read all kinds of occult and spiritualistic books and made experiments according to their directions which appear to have been successful, testifies clearly to the confusion of his otherwise so untroubled soul, which had lost its bearings and was obliged to cling to mysteries, even to

absurdities. The immense piano Concerto in D minor, sometimes seething chaotically, sometimes singing fervently as if in moon-haunted dreams of rapture and suffering, a work at first sketched as a Sonata for two pianos—but the sound did not satisfy him: “even two pianos are not enough for me,” he says dejectedly—and afterwards intended as a Symphony, until at last it came forth as a grandiose dialogue between piano and orchestra; this confession in tones, produced in the spring of Schumann’s catastrophe, has been regarded by many people, and first by Max Kalbeck, most faithful of apostles, as a reflection of that tragedy. The victim’s febrile shudders, expressed in the mighty sequences of trills at the opening, the attempt at suicide and the silent and wild fancies of delirium have all been discovered in the work. This is surely wrong. Brahms did not describe here, he related his own experience, his own tragedy, though perhaps in relation to the other.

He had never yet loved. An innocent schoolboy’s infatuation, the object of which, a singer at the Hamburg theatre, probably had not a notion of it, does not count. Every youth of eighteen goes through this kind of thing, which has nothing whatever to do with the deep mysteries of true love and their decisive, life-giving or destroying powers. Now these powers had him in their grip. Defence was useless. And these months certainly did decide his future life.

The feeling he had at first misinterpreted, then concealed from himself and fought against, pure though it was, overpowered him. But he clenched his teeth and remained silent. He could never have cast a covetous glance at the wife of the master to whom he owed so much affection and gratitude. Now that she was, as it were, a living man’s widow and crowned, furthermore, by the gentle halo of new motherhood, a youth who was worlds removed from all levity and lust and who bowed in reverence before true womanliness was irrevocably debarred from betraying the happy sorrow of his emotions with so much as the faintest breath. He took refuge in a morosely repudiating coolness, in that so often misunderstood gruffness that was for the most part a mask wherewith he covered his too easily shown tenderness and delicate kindness and from which Clara suffered from the beginning, but more and more acutely as time went on, because

her excessively vulnerable disposition could not help taking it for incomprehensible, loveless indifference and want of consideration. Although she was the older of the two, she was yet much too young in her thirty-fifth year to cultivate superior indulgence and wise understanding with which to meet the impetuous young manliness of her friend. Motherly as her whole being was and as her attitude towards the newcomer must at first have been, it was surely a long time before she admitted to herself that her feelings for him were not exclusively reserved for the musician and that her serene inclination for an untainted youth obviously blessed by the Spirit, who seemed almost a boy still and had yet grown to manhood, had undergone any kind of transformation. Even in the first months of her beloved husband's illness did the lonely woman, who according to her years was in the full bloom of her womanhood, rejoice unembarrassed, tranquil and self-assured in the presence of the lovable young man who with fine-feeling care kept from her all that was depressing or agitating and helped her to endure a clouded everyday existence by his indefatigable contrivance of hours of forgetfulness by means of music and other distractions of the mind. Only after the birth of her little Felix, who arrived in June and was to become, like all her sons, a child of sorrow, did she perhaps become aware of the true state of affairs between herself and Johannes.

I do not conceal from myself that it is an exceedingly delicate undertaking to deal with this situation. The biographers, accordingly, have timidly evaded its discussion, much against the view of Brahms himself, who once wrote to Clara:—"What would become of biographies, if they were always to be written with discretion?" I propose to speak humanly about human things, and I know that such great figures as Brahms and Clara will become no whit smaller if the veil is lifted which prudery and false piety have spread over their humanity. On the contrary, they will gain in stature. However erotic influences may affect the fate and the art of such natures, they are by no means decisive as regards their moral qualities. The measure of their worth is to be taken only by the manner in which they prove themselves in such circumstances and the way in which they arise out of them. Here are two people who suffered and who can teach us, because they have themselves learnt it, what

it means to love and to prove worthy of love. Yet it would all have to be passed over in silence, or might at most be alluded to, if this had not remained the only lasting and absorbing love in this master's life, if it had not reflected upon his whole existence—not only in view of his celibacy—and had not left such indelible marks on his career and his music.

For a long time they went through torment side by side; but an hour must have come for them to fall into each other's arms in passionate self-forgetfulness. Of the many thousands of letters they exchanged, a vast number—and especially from among those of the early days—were destroyed when each returned them to the other at Clara's request. Hers are completely missing down to the year 1858 and he sank a great part of his own into the Rhine, much as grim Hagen sank the Nibelung's treasure. And his letters, for all the reluctance to speak and unwillingness to write which they show, are in truth a veritable treasure that reveals a man homogeneous through and through, incapable of dissembling, suffering quietly and blustering to hide his tenderness. Those which remain are sufficiently elucidating, and not only by what we read between the lines. Again and again a tell-tale word will steal in, all his careful prudence notwithstanding—and prudence was indeed necessary, for the possibility of unbidden readers had evidently to be reckoned with. It is certain that Clara wrote, on perusing the exchanged letters again:—"How glad I am that you take pleasure in the letters! In those addressed to me we were obliged, after all, to be much more subtle than I thought at first." Yet all this diplomatic secrecy just failed to prevent the flame from darting forth: the "Dear Frau Schumann" and "Honoured Friend" becomes the "Cherished Friend," and the latter again grows into "Clara, my Clara," the "Most Adored Being" and the "Beloved" point-blank; greetings are converted into embraces and kisses, and into the official *Sie* that is kept up for a long time creeps now and again a surreptitious *Du*. She had almost from the first addressed him in the familiar second person singular, and that with the knowledge of Robert, who sometimes did the same in his letters, to the recipient's great delight, and in her diary she remarked that she could not deny this to Johannes, "since I am as sincerely fond of him as of a son." This had

happened in Hamburg, where Brahms had again spent Christmas among his people in 1854 and where Clara too had been staying. But a few weeks later an end was put to all this misconstruction of their own feelings. In the January of 1855 Clara had gone on a concert tour in Holland and Johannes had remained in Düsseldorf with her children. But two days after her departure he was assailed by such irresistible longing that he could endure it not a moment longer and followed her to Rotterdam. One could scarcely be mistaken in assuming that there the two became at last aware of the true nature of their emotions in the startling joy of being together so unexpectedly, but also of their duty, which enjoined that love should become renunciation while another for whom they greatly cared lived his twilight term behind the walls of Endenich. But tell each other they might, in music and in words, what filled them with bliss and woe. The reticent letters, too, which from this day on flew hither and thither as often as Clara was on her professional excursions or Brahms was obliged to be away from Düsseldorf for a short or a long period, let us feel that the laboriously erected mound resisted but feebly. Johannes made no secret of his passion. In a letter in which he deals with mere business matters in abrupt sentences and which he therefore thinks "too monstrous," he encloses another in the manner of the "Arabian Nights," attributed by him to the "Brahmin," which "describes my condition as accurately as possible." "Thy missive, oh Lady . . . has dropped balsam into a soul tormented by longing and desire and brought healing to a torn and ailing heart," the letter says, and continues:—"Reason is deranged and the heart lost. Would to God that I might be allowed this day to tell thee, rather than to send this letter, that I die from love of thee." But he can tell his feelings without an interpreter from the East. "Let me kiss you (*Sie*). I think ever of you (*Dich*) with the old love, and with a newer and greater too." Another letter, where he again mixes *Sie* and *Du* pell-mell, begins thus with infinite yearning:—"My beloved Clara, I wish I might write to you as tenderly as I love you and do all the good things for you that I wish you. You are so endlessly dear to me that I simply cannot express it. I would go on for ever calling you 'darling' and all sorts of things without tiring of endearments. If this is to continue, I shall

have to put you under glass later on or have you set in gold." Yet another time he writes to the "Dearly Beloved" that he is "a man of straw and far from worthy of being thus locked in your heart, my dear, my glorious Clara. But go on doing it, in and to your heart, as I do with you." Even if they came from a glowingly eloquent man and not from the shyly obstructed and helplessly reserved Brahms, such words, anything but those of a man of straw, are hardly such as one friend writes to another. In each of them, in a hundred others, and not least in those suddenly and conspicuously secretive ones, burns the hardly suppressed fire of a young heart that had been flooded with an ineffable, un hoped-for, sorrowfully sweet rapture. This tone, however, was at once damped down to that of an affectionately anxious and apprehensively sympathetic son when Johannes received a letter from Robert Schumann or when he visited the revered and beloved master in the asylum. It is indescribably touching and admirable to discover at such times the pure and unselfish bigness of heart and the earnest, loving morality of one who has scarcely grown out of boyhood, who often thinks of himself as a mere lad still, and who yet takes the right path with such unerring certainty. We feel clearly how gladly he would give anything to secure the dear master's recovery, how he excludes himself, how happy he is made by each fond or intelligible word spoken by Schumann and how indifferent he is to his own wishes. "Rejoice with me!" he wrote exultingly to Joachim when favourable news from Eendenich once again led to a transient and deceptive spell of hope. To the adored woman, who on this occasion he regarded only as the disconsolate wife of the poor invalid, he described with infinite pleasure each detail of a visit on which he had found him fresh, happily reminiscent and lucidly serene beyond all expectation. Schumann remembered all the particulars of his home and his travels with the worshipped, glorious woman, whose picture he received with a pang and continued to look upon with moist eyes; he went with Johannes through the latter's C major Sonata and discussed certain passages; he was concerned about the publication of his own *Gesänge der Frühe* and told him of Fugues he had recently composed, but refused to show; he uttered various wishes, for he would not ask the doctors for so much as a sheet of note-paper

to write to Clara; he even accompanied his visitor as far as Bonn, though to be sure under the oppressive and disquieting escort of a keeper, and took his leave with an embrace and a kiss. They even played duets on the piano. Another time Brahms left the place saddened and alarmed: he could hardly understand a word of what the patient absently babbled to himself; he only saw the body, and no longer the wonderful, passionately dream-steeped soul, of the tenderest of all German musicians, who now sat before him lisping like a child, playing in a state of torpor or sunk into complete lethargy, staring into the void. In his considerate care he concealed his grief and horror from the anguished woman, telling her only what was absolutely necessary. But she had already been sorely terrified by a letter from her husband in which he expressed his presentiment of some coming horror and his feeling that he would never see her again. She nevertheless saw him shortly before his death. He knew her and held her lovingly with his glance and in his arm, but repeatedly fell into his silent brooding again. For two and a half years this martyrdom continued in a ceaseless suspense between hope and despair. On July 29, 1856, Robert Schumann vanished into the domain of night which had called to him so long and where he had his home.

All this must often have gone beyond the young man's strength. He was not one of those who lay themselves bare easily; but his music, however chastely veiled it may frequently be, tells us how his feeling must have wavered at that time between agitation and restless despondency, superhuman happiness and deadly fear. He was torn from one extreme to the other. He may at times have wrestled with himself:—"To go to thee no more did I declare and vow," * only to go ever and again to her who was his Queen, lovely in her gentle goodness.† He knew well enough that she had need of him, that it was for him to deputize for husband and for sons, who were all of them ailing and condemned to early death, not least the last-born, Felix, who gave promise of shaping into a poet—Brahms made his poem, "*Meine Liebe ist grün*," immortal—and who was cut off at the age of barely twenty-five. Johannes forced himself to gaiety

* Brahms's song, "*Nicht mehr zu dir zu gehen, beschloss ich und beschwor ich.*"

† Another song, "*Wie bist du, meine Königin, in sanfter Güte wonnenvoll!*"

and a cheerfully stimulating frame of mind in his endeavour to cheer the woman he loved, but feared almost immediately to be thought superficial or even flippant by her. Then again he would be guilty of apparently surly rebuffs, especially when his works were mentioned. He tried to account to Clara for both attitudes and it is touching to see how intent he was to be rightly judged and not misunderstood by the ever too easily wounded friend:—"You bear your sorrow with such dignity that it is only too easy to forget pain and to indulge lightly in jests. I am still young, even boyish at times: you must forgive me. You surely believe and know that my feelings are more serious and that youthful exuberance or lightheartedness may make me seem different, but can *never* let me forget." And again, though at a much later date:—"Your people, and yourself especially, take me, I believe, to be quiet different from what I am. I am never, or extremely rarely, satisfied with myself. Perhaps never comfortable, but pleased and darkly moody by turns. However, I am so disinclined and unfitted to lament my lack of genius and skill to others that in any case I always present a different appearance. In addition to which I am so happy about the pleasure I give to others, and especially to you, for example, that I cannot help showing it and looking as if I appeared so bright and sure of victory thanks to merits of my own. Oh, why can we not look into ourselves and know just how much of divinity there may be in us?" He learnt in those days that saints are no artists—and artists no saints. How ineffaceably this recognition was branded upon his soul is proved by a terrible word he said at a ripe age to his friend Rudolf von der Leyen:—"Those who meet me in company, where I seem contented and ready to jest with others, must think me cheerful: to you I need hardly say that within myself I never laugh." His mind bore the lasting and incurable scar left by the wound of his early years.

After the death of Robert Schumann, all these conflicts must have grown into the threat of a crisis and it is gruesome to think that this youth, flowering in his strength and inner wealth, was at that time haunted by the ghost of suicide. A darkly beautiful and profoundly affecting work reveals this overcasting of the soul and the liberation from the tensions and overstrainings of this phase of his life: the piano Quartet in C minor. Two of the

master's sayings, moreover, bear witness to what is in the nature of a confession in this music, which calls to us like voices from an abyss and afterwards rises to a magnificently contained, pain-surmounting song and to the defiant expression of a courageous will to live. "An illustration to the last chapter of the man in the blue frock-coat and the yellow waistcoat," Brahms called the first movement. There is also a testimony in writing for this catastrophic atmosphere, and almost in the same words, dating from nearly twenty years after the young composer's woes, when he sent the work in its newly-finished revision to his publisher, Simrock. "This Quartet is both old and new—and so the whole fellow is good for nothing!" he says, and adds, not without at the same time pouring scorn on the illustrated title-pages of his works, which he abominated:—"Furthermore you may place a picture on the title-page, namely, a head—with a pistol in front of it. This will give you some idea of the music. I shall send you a photograph of myself for the purpose! You also may make use of a blue frock-coat, a yellow waistcoat and top-boots, as you appear to be so fond of colour prints." And yet another time he alludes to his Werther mood in more general and for that very reason more personal words:—"Let it remind you of one who is on the point of shooting himself and to whom no other way remains open." Fortunately for him and for us, another way did remain open; he took refuge in his work and there found freedom. He took leave of the beloved; she kept the friend. In the adagio, which flows from a supremely great heart and breathes its last in manly sorrow, we seem to hear a song of separation which freed him of all that was earthly and hard to bear, and we may fancy to perceive in this illimitably soaring melody a human voice and distinct words:—"Clara, dear one, farewell: my path leads aside and upward and must needs be lonely . . ."

He had to make the decision, had to choose between a love that filled his life and a mission to which this life was to be dedicated. And he chose art. To do otherwise would have destroyed him. He tore himself away. Maybe that spatial separation made it easier for him.

Eugenie Schumann, Robert and Clara's youngest daughter, who was five years of age at the death of her father and who in her seventy-seventh year published a charmingly endearing, wise

and living book of recollections,* must have felt, in spite of her great youth, that there was more than friendship between her mother and Johannes. It is not difficult to understand this touching old lady's reticence and her discreet attitude towards her own mother and towards one whom from her earliest days she loved like a member of the family, an attitude that makes her intimate the nature of this relation but very vaguely and afterwards carefully tone down what she actually does write:—"We had the fullest understanding of our Mother's character and knew that in her there were no boundaries between the artist and the woman, that both were so inseparably interblended that it was impossible to say where the one finished and the other began. We thanked Heaven for having sent her Brahms as wayside companion and we knew, too, that in spite of all his bluntness he was devoted heart and soul to Mother, that he loved and revered her more than anyone else in the world." And farther on:—"After Father was taken ill, Brahms was filled with the most heartfelt devotion for Mother. It dominated his whole being and to it several years of his life were—not sacrificed, for he obeyed the deepest need of his heart, but consecrated. But the knowledge that a task was awaiting him that would claim him entirely and that was not compatible with an exclusive attachment to a friend, could not fail to come to him. To recognize this problem and to look at once for its solution was characteristic of his manliness; and that it was done abruptly also lay in his nature, and perhaps in the nature of the case. What is certain is that he fought a hard battle to steer the ship of his life in a new direction, that the consciousness of having hurt my Mother at that time frequently distressed him afterwards and, since the wrong could not be righted again, found vent in a rough bearing. For my Mother this period was the more trying because she could not understand the change. . . . Her attitude towards Brahms was, and always remained, the same. She loved him truly and sincerely from the depth of her heart." This love, she thinks, might have been called motherly if another element had not been at once admixed to it by her admiration for the great musician:—"The high opinion in which she held the artist transmitted itself

* There is an English translation by Marie Busch (Heinemann), which, however, I have not used here.—E.B.

to the man. Just as she could not in herself separate the woman from the musician, so she was incapable of dividing Brahms the man from Brahms the artist, and there she was no doubt right, if only she could have understood the man as well as she understood the composer." What the loving daughter expresses, and what she withholds, tells us enough.

"Whenever you write anything," he said decades later to the poet, Josef Victor Widmann, "always ask yourself whether a woman like Schumann would look upon it with approbation. If you doubt that, then cross it out." Thus highly did he think of the woman whom he loved as the elect of her sex.

For all that, he could never shake off a feeling of guilt. It weighed on him and his music expresses it. It is pressure that hardens the rock, and it was the pressure of this wrong that made him hard, both towards himself and towards others. And he never held in his arms another woman to whom his heart inclined. With all his beatifying inner wealth, he went through life alone and starved of the best it has to give. How true this is may be judged from his entire lyrical output as well as from many a word that came from his lips almost against his will, for even to those he most cared for he sought to deny any insight into his sore heart. He had lost the innocence of his conscience and he carried his guilt painfully. That as an artist too he was destined to become culpable in an honestly ebullient but unjust and misdirected revolt against what was inferior to him, only heightens the tragedy of his existence,—an existence that stood wholly under the sign of love, yet was only to be crowned with laurel, never with roses. Johannes Brahms made no beloved immortal.

V

COURT SERVICE AND FREE ACTIVITY

DURING these inwardly eventful two years and a half Brahms must have been filled to overflowing with music. Besides the larger works—the stressful, onswelling B major Trio, the F minor Sonata that is akin to it by nature and by its expression of pain, and the piano Concerto that grew out of a Symphony—he produced numerous works of greater or smaller dimensions, of which little more than the wonderfully vigorous Ballades for piano and the love-inspired Variations on a theme by Schumann stood the test of his severe self-criticism. The latter are a very diary in music: “Clara speaks in one of them,” as he writes to Joachim, and in others he continues to dream Schumann’s dreams for him or sings his own secret grief to the night. Many other compositions, including a Mass for voices, a symphonic movement and a Gavotte and Sarabande he delivered up to destruction. Other variations, such as those on a theme of his own (Op. 21) and those on a Hungarian melody already sketched during his time with Reményi, which sound more recalcitrant, even surly and joyless at times, were revised, while jottings for the first movement of the later C minor Symphony were laid aside for a number of years. The song collections were increased by two books which appeared as Op. 6 and Op. 7, but the completion of the *Werther* Quartet in C minor, first begun in C sharp minor, was also deferred to a later time.

It may be that his melancholic nature had become indifferent to the outer world at that period of dejection and perturbing experiences, that only in the solitude of forest-trees or cornfields, where he could listen free and unoppressed to the tumult of song within him, he could forget and give himself wholly to art; yet he was much too young, the virile freshness and robust health of his exceptionally early maturity incited him far too powerfully to

giving and taking without reserve, to keep away for long from the true friends for whom he cared and from the musical activities around him in which his interest was less wholehearted. For he must have been captivating in his young manliness whenever he was not irritable or unsociable, especially when he wrought confusion by his predilection for boyish tricks and mystifications. Eugenie Schumann still recollects him as one wholly given over to the experience of the instant, possessed of a clear and sharp vision, one who had something boyishly sunny about him when he allowed what occupied him at the moment to bubble over, who keenly understood and communicated whatever was of significance and as decisively rejected all that was merely consequential and superficial, generally with an equivocal, jesting or cuttingly disdainful answer. Albert Dietrich, the friend of his youth, describes him similarly in his triumphant strength:—"The young artist's nature was healthy through and through, and even the most sustained mental labour hardly strained it. But then, he could fall fast asleep at any time of the day he chose. In his intercourse with those of his own capacity he was lively, sometimes exuberant, rough and full of mad conceits. He would come up my stairs with a youthful impetuosity, knock at the door with both fists and enter like a whirlwind without waiting to be bidden. He is a dear, fine fellow: genius stands written on his brow and shines out of his clear blue eyes. He . . . has already suffered much and gone through hard times, but has learnt a great deal and strengthened his character in that school." No wonder that he won the hearts of all who came near him.

That enmity also began to rise up against him is not surprising. It was not merely lack of understanding: that was ever the lot of genius, will always remain so, and later compensates for itself—for only mediocrity triumphs as quickly as it afterwards disappears. But young Johannes had arisen with too meteoric a rapidity, and what is more, he was too sure of himself, too openly hostile to the machinations of cliques, and too inaccessible to any of the compromises and political moves of art. Press publicity he hated to such an extent that he once declared he would not even reply publicly if some newspaper or another accused him of having murdered his father. With a man of this stamp the adherents of coteries did not know what to do. It was therefore

decided that he should be disparaged, and it was done effectively enough in all conscience. It troubled him very little, as far as his works were concerned. They could wait, and their time was sure to come. But neither was his immaculate personality spared, and he must have burned with noble indignation when an infamous scribbler of the *Süddeutsche Musikzeitung* dared to suspect him of having misused the already affected mental state of Robert Schumann, who in his "pitiable affliction must for the moment be regarded as beyond reproach," in order to coax the essay of 'Neue Bahnen' from the master's pen, "Herr Brahms" having thus craftily "made a name for himself before he was officially in the least entitled to it." Even this odious, scoundrelly slander, which was aggravated by the cowardice of anonymity, he proudly left unanswered.

In the spring of 1855 Joachim again came to Düsseldorf, this time for a longer period, and they played a good deal of chamber music. The Nether-Rhenish Festivals of that year and the next were also eagerly participated in. Liszt, who had repeatedly expressed the desire to see Brahms again, was present and remained a few hours longer than he had originally intended in order to spend another pleasant evening with him and Joachim. He also sought out Clara Schumann, about whom he had shortly before written beautifully in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. But whatever chivalrous kindness and open receptiveness the most generous and unselfish of all the great musicians might lavish on those who held different views, he was once and for all branded by them as the leading embodiment of false art, as the corrupting mountebank, and he would have left it at that, had not his great heart felt drawn again and again towards this mightily youthful striving. At one of these musical festivals Brahms also made the acquaintance of Eduard Hanslick, the most powerful force in Viennese musical criticism, who was later to become his most eloquent herald, but hardly knew at first what to make of his music. Nor had Brahms at first too high an opinion of this musical æsthete and his much-discussed theoretical treatise. At any rate he wrote thus to Clara Schumann:—"Hanslick is a writer on music too. I was going to read his book, *The Beautiful in Music*, with which Sahr is greatly taken; but at a glance I found so much stupidity in it that I left it alone." But the composer's

human character struck a sympathetic chord in the famous Wagner-killer, who by the way had not yet assumed that function. He describes his first impression in these words:—"In his twenty-third year Brahms, with his long, fair hair, his forget-me-not eyes and his rosy complexion, resembled some ideal youth in the works of Jean Paul."

In the autumn Brahms, after a long absence, played once again in his native city and was from that time onward to appear frequently at concerts in Hamburg. He scarcely ever performed a work of his own and the applause was not overwhelming. He was obliged to face an audience more often than he liked. Only with Joachim or with Clara he enjoyed playing in public; for the rest he regarded it as an irksome, though necessary, means to earn a living. He also played in Leipzig again after a visit to Joachim at Hanover and a Christmas holiday at Clara Schumann's. His mentality and the power of his interpretations were admired there, but the critics carped at his technique. At the end of January, 1856, he made the acquaintance of Anton Rubinstein in Hanover, but neither at that time nor later did the two come to care for each other. The greatest pianist next to Liszt never in his life played a note of Brahms, not even in the famous seven programmes of his vast historical cycle. They were too antithetical and had their home in entirely different worlds. Yet Rubinstein's words on Brahms make an exceedingly accurate silhouette, drawn with ill-intentioned artfulness, until we come to the final sentence, which provokes controversy:—" *Je ne saurais trop préciser l'impression qu'il m'a faite; pour le salon, il n'est pas assez gracieux; pour la salle de concert, il n'est pas assez fougueux; pour les champs, il n'est pas assez primitif; pour la ville, pas assez général—j'ai peu de foi en ces natures-là.*" The elements of the mixture are maliciously well dispensed. Nothing is missing but what matters most. It is a mere trifle—the genius that blends them into unity.

How seriously Brahms took his task, how much he still felt he had to learn, and how mistrustful he was of being able to govern himself, is proved by an arrangement he made in the spring of 1856 with Joachim, who was as greatly surprised by the proposal as by the iron conscientiousness with which it was to be carried out. He suggested a weekly exchange of contrapuntal

studies including canons of the most difficult kind and fugues involving all the art of combination. They were intended to train the hand and achieve an effortless command of the composer's material. Each Sunday they were to send to each other what they had done in the course of the week, and the one who did not carry out the pact and could not justify himself by sustained work at a large composition, was to pay a forfeit into a common money-box whose proceeds were to be devoted to the purchase of books. Thus the twofold aim of greater technical mastery and of a gain in general knowledge was attained, and their pleasure at the acquisition of some new volume of poetry or history is none the less delightful for the undertone of a quietly reproachful derision. It is touching to see how absolutely the young master, who needless to say was by far the more industrious of the two, submitted to his friend's authority, and one cannot help being struck by the fact that Joachim, who certainly had greater experience, actually did seem to assume, for all his deferential attitude towards genius, the part of authoritative adviser. From the purely theoretical point of view that may have been fitting; but it has already been said how incredibly Brahms overrated Joachim as composer. It is hard to trust one's eyes on reading passages in his letters like the following, addressed to Clara:—"I am seized by a new amazement every time I look at them again (the Overtures to *Hamlet* and *Henry IV*) by this gigantic Shakespearean imagination and by these melodies, glowing like red-hot irons;" or when he says, with regard to his friend, that "nobody, surely, has yet wielded Beethoven's pen so mightily;" and when he writes this incomprehensible sentence in one of his frequent moods of fainthearted and despondent self-disparagement, after his perusal of the *Henry IV* Overture, which "uplifts" him:—"What I cannot understand is that you find any interest in things like mine, the paltry variations and trifling sonatas that I write! I always seem to see you alive in front of me when I play your compositions, deeply moved and yet elated as if you were just in the act of creating." But Joachim does not appear to have had any objection to this inordinately high opinion.

The two saw each other again at Hamburg in the autumn of 1856. Clara, who had been in England in the late spring, was

now giving concerts in Denmark, and Johannes stayed for seven weeks with his parents, to whom the loving and never vainglorious son was heartily attached. Unlike many others who had risen from the ranks of simple people, he always acknowledged his family, was never ashamed of their homeliness, let them take their share in his life long after he had become one of the great of the earth, and saved them from care in the most tactful and generous manner, including the rather disagreeable, shiftless and ungrateful brother and sister, and later on, the stepmother of whom he was sincerely fond and much beholden for the late happiness she gave his father. With what infinite discretion he prevented expressions of gratitude and made acceptance easy may be judged from the story which related that he once said to his father on taking leave:—"You know, Father, in any misfortune music is and remains the best comforter. Only read assiduously in my old score of *Saul*, and you will find what you need." And when the old man, in some trouble or another, did open Handel's work as a remedy against his mood of depression, he discovered a bank note between each leaf—and they were the notes he needed.

After much vacillation Brahms gave up the idea of settling down at Düsseldorf for good. He was uncertain as to where he should remain. In Hamburg he was more indifferently treated and more coolly received than anywhere else, which seems to be the rule in artists' native cities. There the finished man had been seen in his tutelage, unappreciated and insignificant; it was found hard to believe in his present greatness and he received at best a condescending pat on the back, which was not to his taste. Should he go to Hanover? But there Joachim's position had begun to totter, he handed in his resignation time after time and had moreover obtained a two years' leave for the purpose of concert tours. It seemed therefore wiser to wait. Johannes remained as much as possible near Clara, made trips and journeys of recreation to Switzerland and to the Rhine with her, Joachim and Grimm joining them here and there. These travels were to be the last pilgrimages through the land of youth and love, for Brahms had received a call to Detmold, while Clara was to remove to Berlin and teach at the 'Hochschule für Musik.' There came an hour laden with sorrow and weighted by scruples. At the grave of Robert Schumann the lovers stood side by side

for the last time and silently took leave of each other. Their friendship they kept until death.

A youth had gone with a fervently glowing heart to fulfil his vocation, matured in sorrow by almighty time and eternal fate.* She who remained behind was an ageing woman.

Detmold was at that time not unlike some enchanted Andersen country. The time of the Margraves seemed to have stood still there. Round about life might be surging—murderous rebellions had raged up and down the country—but here the news of all these unseemly, threatening and seditious doings were received merely with an incredulous shake of the head. The word “freedom” indeed must have sounded oddly in a small principality where it was just then a question of reinstating the serfdom that had but lately been abolished. German rococo, Empire style in miniature and a little *Biedermeier* †—that was the approximate mixture. The stage coach was still in use, not only figuratively but in reality, for the railway ceased at the frontiers of this duodecimo state. It would scarcely have been surprising to find princesses in disguise, artificial nightingales and the courtly household of Tragant in the castle of “Solitude.” Needless to say, there was music, though to be sure little that was strenuous. The chronicles do not record whether Beethoven was placed on the Index as too savage, too strangely disquieting and too revolutionary. And it was just into such an environment that Johannes Brahms was to be thrown. In the midst of all this elegant formality and etiquette he must have looked like the German Michael ‡ among a collection of automatic waxworks, with his lack of polish in the forms of social intercourse which he sought to hide under the unbridled demeanour of the undergraduate at large. But these repeated autumn and winter seasons at Detmold also appear to be part of the schemes of fate. They were times free from care, apt to restore a wounded and slowly healing soul and to offer shelter before a new tempest of creation. The two Serenades composed there, and accordingly called the

* The author alludes to a passage in Goethe's *Prometheus*.—E.B.

† The style in dress, furniture, &c., that roughly corresponds to what we call Early Victorian.—E.B.

‡ An emblematic national figure like John Bull or Uncle Sam, an honest, uncouth peasant with boorish manners but not without dignity.—E.B.

"Detmold Serenades," are unique among all his works. He never again wrote music so encompassed by innocent tenderness. It is as if Papa Haydn had been given a son, so antiquated is this evening music, whose themes seem to wear powdered wigs and to walk in buckled shoes. Without being courtly,—rather do they sound the comfortably amiable notes of pastoral shawms—they have something of the tarnish and the childlike candour of old times, and one would like to take them for accompaniments to pictures out of a Germanized world of Dickens or stories by Jean Paul. So strongly did the calming seclusion of this decorous and gracious world affect him. He must often have rubbed his eyes in surprise, like another Petrus Forshegrund * sung to by the bird of Paradise, as if a thousand years had gone like an hour—and perhaps sometimes an hour like a thousand years. But he was not the man to become lost to the world and to himself for any length of time; he remained awake and active even during this sojourn which he did not always enjoy and which he renewed with some reluctance.

He had already been invited to Detmold in the summer of 1856; but at that time the death of Schumann had prevented his accepting the Prince's offer. When it was repeated the following year, he almost welcomed it, in spite of some misgivings, for material as well as psychic reasons: it made the separation from Clara easier and, since it provided a motive, less wounding. It was Princess Friederike, the reigning Prince's sister, who agitated with such friendly impatience for his engagement, and she was seconded by her lady-in-waiting, Frau von Meysenbug, the mother of Malwida von Meysenbug, the respected authoress of the famous *Memoirs of an Idealist*. The two ladies, who were pupils of Clara Schumann, had come to know and to appreciate the young master during their latest visit to Düsseldorf. The Princess ardently desired to secure him as teacher, as director of the musical events at court and master of the choir which united vocally gifted and well-bred women of the local middle class with the courtiers and in which the Prince himself sang eagerly—and probably flirted a little too. Brahms having arranged a weeks's music at the Prince's—against an anything but princely fee—a contract was signed in which a fixed salary was agreed

* The Legend of Petrus Forshegrund is in Gerhart Hauptmann's *Der arme Heinrich*.
—E.B.

upon as well as the nature of his services, to be carried out from the month of September until New Year in accordance with the wishes of the Princess. Etiquette for once showed its advantages here. Since the ruler's sister herself condescended to take lessons from the bourgeois musician, the court ladies, in their craving for favour, had to follow her example in due submission, while outsiders, who may have hoped to gain some advantage at court, also thought it wise to follow the dictates of this latest fashion. Diverting as it is to see Brahms profit by such servility, he found it far from amusing himself. He was furious to be obliged to waste himself on all this provoking incompetence, though prudent enough to refuse only the most preposterous pupils and otherwise to resign himself with grim humour to these forced but at least well-paid lessons.

He was not particularly liked; only his two patronesses and Frau von Meysenbug's two sons knew how to value him. He did not compromise, for he had no talent for sycophancy and displayed the fullest self-assurance. The free son of the Hansa city had no regard whatever for noble birth, which he considered rather as a defect it was necessary to make good by character and accomplishment. He knew what he wanted and what he was worth, and had an emphatic way of bringing the knowledge home to supercilious nullities that contrasted sharply with the respect in which he held all intellectual creativeness. It is not surprising that such bearing was not calculated to win him especial sympathy from hollow-headed people, whether aristocrats or merely well-born sheep's-heads. It is in any case difficult to impress oneself in such surroundings, and Brahms lacked every vestige of foppishness. It is impossible to imagine him manicured and scented, and though he was of the most scrupulous cleanliness in body and dress, he always had the appearance of one who washes with common soap at the pump and who—and not only in the literal sense—knew nothing, and wished to know nothing, of pomatums and perfumes. He dressed neatly but comfortably and valued a cultivated brain distinctly higher than well groomed hands. For a courtier he was not made.

For all that, he was valued as a musician, induced to remain and insistently invited to come again. The choral practices

gave him pleasure and taught him much about the composition for combined voices and the technique of conducting. Various works by Mozart and Schumann were studied and even Handel's *Messiah* was attempted, but folksongs were always turned to again as the mainstay; they were the great love of Brahms the musician, who found in the folk poetry, both musical and verbal, with its sterling simplicity and its ingenuous or drastic expression of feeling, the purest sources for his own work and ever again let it fertilize his imagination anew. He began and ended with it: in fact with the very same song. "*Verstohlen geht der Mond auf*," sings the andante theme in his first piano Sonata and with his arrangement of the same endearing "*Blaublümelein*" song closes the collection of folksongs with which he thought to conclude his life's work. A fully closed circle. Less agreeable, though not altogether vexatious, were the lessons he was obliged to give his most exalted pupil. She was not unmusical, anxious to satisfy her severe master, and happy when she could take part with him in one of the evening concerts at court and earn his comfortable growl of approbation. Only the evenings themselves became irksome and he generally treated them *en bagatelle*, at least as far as the programmes were concerned. It was repugnant to him to unlock for this drearily superficial society the precious treasures which he could scatter so generously in his home or in a congenial circle of those who were in accord with him. Excursions with the young Meysenbugs and the excellent violinist Bargheer, athletic competitions in which the still slender Brahms nearly always lost, offered hours of relaxation. The outward picture of this princely seat in miniature, which looked as if it had slept through the changes of several centuries, was not inapt to enrich a musician's dreams by much that was quaint and pleasant. On contemplating the old castle—the princely family resided at the new one—with its moats, the embrasures in its clumsily massive and round-bellied tower, its gables to which the ivy climbs in serried clusters of tendrils, its vistas of tranquil, tree-shaded courtyards, one seems the better to understand the Serenades in which also time appears to have stood still, and the plashing of fountains and rustling of trees in this fable-haunted world is surely echoed by many a song written in those days.

But neither nature nor art, neither friendship nor affection, could hold him there. Nor did he stay an hour longer than he was compelled. On New Year's Day of 1857 he took his seat in the yellow stage-coach of Thurn and Taxis and drove home to Hamburg. There he remained during the winter months, though this sojourn did not prove any more profitable than those before. So he went one day to see what life in Berlin was like, took pleasure in the picture-galleries there and also in the renewed acquaintance with the nobly inspired writer Hermann Grimm, who had become Bettina von Arnim's son-in-law and whose books on Goethe, Michelangelo and Raphael have to this day remained among the choicest artistic performances in biographical literature. He also saw Clara again, after many months of separation and with a melancholy joy. They must have had much to tell and much more to keep from each other. At home he was impatient, could not long endure his stay with his family, and was angry with Joachim for remaining so long in England, in fact for having gone there at all. He was sorely disappointed and annoyed that his friend could bring himself without distress to "make music for money-bags"—and especially his own noble music. He had always advised him not to go, unable to understand that Joachim would not rather stay and spend with him the rare moments at which they could in any case be together, and that a true artist could run after earnings which an assured position made superfluous for him. And now Joachim had gone in spite of his ceaseless and violent remonstrances and remained moreover an unwarrantably long time, by far exceeding his original intention. Hamburg no longer held Brahms; he was restless and burned to show his friend the new Serenade and especially to seek his advice on points of orchestration, an art in the command of which he felt uncertain and which he had here attempted for the first time. In his impatience he went by way of Hanover on to Göttingen, where Jussuf—as he had named Joachim when he found him one day smoking a hookah with a red fez on his head—intended to take his summer holiday. There he found at least the faithful "Ise," Julius Otto Grimm, and the hours spent in the company of this honest, warmhearted and vivacious man and musician helped him over the ill-humour caused by the delay. In addition to this, newly awakened,

gentle voices of love began to lure his already too experienced heart. But he had learnt to distrust himself. Perhaps he suspected that he was one of those to whom love comes but once and whose later inclinations it kills in the bud, and he was not made for unscrupulously frivolous adventures. Man's longing for women and child and home, however, was strong in him and never wholly left him. It was during that summer at Göttingen that he dreamed of them for the first time.

VI

“MY LOVE IS LIKE THE LILAC-BUSH”*

AGATHE VON SIEBOLD was a figure that might have stepped out of a poem by Uhland, wondrously gentle, gracious and intellectually animated, handsome and bright, filled with music. She sang with a particularly charming, soulful and euphonious voice and her ardently sweet expression irresistibly captivated her hearers. Music had once again become matchmaker: the young master, who accompanied her in her songs, succumbed to the singer who interpreted his very dreams for him. It was a perfectly delicate, silently guarded relation, and so it remained. The two young people were aware of their love, found a shy, calmly intimate happiness in the knowledge and attempted to tell each other of it in music or with a light, hasty pressure of hands; but it remained unexpressed and gradually the feeling became extinct as quietly as it had formed itself. No jarring word of desire falsified the beautiful secrecy of this pure relationship, which lasted all that early summer. It would be difficult to decide whether its termination was due to Johannes' tender conscience, which may have reproached him with a breach of faith with the “only” woman, whom he had but just left,—and thus a breach of faith with his own better self,—to an imprudent word on the part of one of the watchful women friends who every day expected the announcement of an engagement, or merely to the poor prospects for the establishment of a household of his own which his then inadequate and uncertain material position led him to imagine. Probably all three reasons played their part, as they did in later cases of the same nature, to say nothing of a fourth, mentioned by him years later to the poet Josef Victor Widmann who had won his affection:—“At the time I was most anxious to marry, my things were hissed in the concert halls, or at least received with icy coldness. When I entered my lonely

* The original title is “*Meine Liebe ist grün . . .*”—that of a song by Brahms; but “My love is green” would be dangerously like a parody of Burns.—E.B.

chamber after such failures, they did not hurt me—on the contrary. But if I had been obliged to meet the questioning eyes of a wife and to tell her that once again I had failed—that I could not have endured. And if she had tried to console me, . . . pity for a man's lack of success from his own wife . . . ough! I cannot bear to think of the hellish torment this would have meant, at least to my mind." The excessive sensitiveness of feeling and the nobility of outlook which manifests itself in all this and shows how rarely this modest youth was satisfied with himself, was responsible for the fact that he remained solitary.

How far the fair daughter of an eminent scientist—her father was a professor of medicine—realized and overcame this love can only be imagined, but it is certain that she contrived to forget it, however hard it may have been—and it would have meant a great deal for any woman to be loved by a Johannes Brahms. In any case, she married a few years later, while he became more and more of a bachelor with all his crotchettiness, his helplessness in practical matters—it used to be a catastrophe for him to be obliged to make and post a parcel—and his pedantic orderliness; but no amount of renunciation could wholly suppress his longings. "Thank goodness, I unfortunately still remain single," he would answer with humorous resignation to certain inquiries.

For all that, the feelings with which he went through this phase of his existence are well enough known: he expressed them in the songs of that time, in the duets written for Agathe, and in the wonderfully tender, gently evanescent and woe-dispelling string Sextet in G major. It must be said, however, that just these songs are much richer in emotional content than in melodic power and in fastidiousness of invention. The duets, Op. 20, in fact, are positively meagre and conspicuously barren of imagination; they have an effect at once of arid sensibility and querulousness, and what is most remarkable is that the composer evidently saw in each note written at that time the face of the beloved smiling with such compelling sweetness that these works for all time escaped his self-criticism, which he had trained to sit coldly in judgment and to remain inaccessible to praise. He would not else have published the duets fully four years later and thus set his seal definitely upon them. It is true that among the

songs are a few that bear his authentic finger-print, and two or three noble examples:—*Vor dem Fenster*, for instance, with the wild outburst of its middle section, "*Was schiert mich Vater? was schiert mich Mutter?*" which shouts a desire too long restrained and now irresistible in a coy maiden's face; the mysterious and dreamy *An eine Aolsharfe*, which at first recalls a copper engraving by Chodowiecki, but afterwards becomes wholly the mystic echo of the singer's own soul, vibrating to a breath of love; or the enchantingly fresh and impetuous *Der Schmied*, with the silvery hammering and ringing of its spark-scattering accompaniment. In some others of the group a certain melodic relaxation is undeniably to be noticed; it is only in the incomparable construction, in the adaption to the poetic and metrical subtleties and in the delicacy of the harmonic pastel tints that the growing, and often the finished, master shows himself ever and again. All this may be more opportunely discussed in another connexion: it may suffice here to draw attention to the poems chosen with the purpose of reducing them to musical sound. They may be read in the *Brahms Texts* edited by G. Ophüls, the most revealing, most personal of all anthologies, a veritable self-portrait, a bookful of confessions.

The summer had flown all too quickly; it was time to return to Detmold. But Brahms had no sooner arrived there than he found occasion to curse furiously. A lady of the court had been taken ill, and there was no question of either music or lessons for the moment. So he might as well have stayed happily at Göttingen, enjoying eloquently silent hours, accompanying certain songs and settling profound and difficult musical problems in the company of friend Jussuf. And now he had to squat in this accursed hole and mope. He did not do so, however, but followed Joachim's advice to rescore for full orchestra the Serenade in D major, originally written for string octet. This labour proceeded not without some groans and the depressing thought that his first symphony, which he had imagined very different, should have turned out so modest a creature with so insignificant a countenance. He once again envied Joachim, whose works stood "so firmly upon their legs" and were so soundly and freely grown, whereas his own were always "in need of an orthopædic institute." He merely happened to forget

that he had already created his real first symphony, and that it was a Titanic work:—his piano Concerto in D minor, suffused with tragedy and piled up to the fullest greatness, where a solo part certainly stands aside in monologue from the rest of the instrumental body, but is yet grafted on to it with an effect of complete unity and amalgamated with the organism without any of the virtuoso's self-complacent vanities. It is more radically shaped into a symphony with an outstanding piano part than even Beethoven's Concertos. Joachim continued to support his dissatisfied friend with practical counsel; but as he again and again received new "proof copies" for his approval and correction and was repeatedly informed that "I have no judgment and the piece is now beyond my power . . . Nothing good will ever come of it," he at last lost his patience with this nearly pathological despondency and in the end he rated his friend—by letter—in these terms:—"But, man alive, for heaven's sake let the copyist loose on the Concerto once and for all: when am I going to hear it at last?" He then performed it himself for the disheartened composer in Hanover, where Brahms had broken the journey to Detmold. Brahms sat at the piano in person, Joachim conducted, and Clara Schumann listened: she had come from Cologne and Düsseldorf, where she had given recitals, and she told Johannes that in Cologne she had played a couple of his Hungarian Dances, unpublished as yet at that time, from manuscript, to the great delight of her audience. The trial performance of the piano Concerto turned out brilliantly, Brahms was encouraged and full of confidence, while Joachim insisted on giving this Promethean work a hearing at his orchestral concerts as soon as possible. Since Clara did not seem herself capable of mastering in so short a time the enormous physical and intellectual exigencies of a work whose difficulties lay not only in the technique of its entirely new pianistic problems, Brahms was obliged to undertake the performance himself, and he indeed had ample time to practise to his heart's content during his enforced leisure at Detmold. He actually did play the Concerto under Joachim's direction, and its success was a doubly honourable one: for the work and its interpreter on the one hand and for the audience on the other, who were not to be deterred by the unaccustomed features of a long composition

with jagged conformations and, sometimes over-emphasized emotional exuberance. It must have appeared far less accessible than it is to-day to listeners who were as yet unfamiliar with the Brahmsian idiom with all its austerities, its lassitudes and its repressed energy. One must have grown up with it in order to feel it as a part of oneself, as we are able to do to-day. In any case, it redounds to the glory of the Hanoverian public to have recognized a star in its obscurity, to have perceived greatness even where they could not understand it. A few months later the composer was received in a very different manner with the same work and its interpretation: it was in fact rejected with such emphatic hostility that for a long time it was a stumbling-block in his path of creator and performer. And it is sufficiently astonishing that this should happen in the very city where he had won his first tangible successes and where he had been so cordially received and entertained—in Leipzig.

A phrase by the master, quoted a moment ago, may have struck the reader: that his works should have been at first received with icy indifference, if indeed they were not hissed. No mention has so far been made of a frigid reception of his music. His victorious progress as a composer is a matter for surprise, especially when the seriousness, the novelty and the remote beauty of his compositions is borne in mind, for it is quite conceivable that their twilight can only gradually have become cleared for many hearers. In his native city alone was he coolly treated, and even there only as a pianist. But now he was really to experience the hissing of one of his works. This fell to his lot with the cyclopean, gripping piano Concerto, played by himself, and it occurred in the hallowed rooms of the Gewandhaus. It deserves a memorial tablet, a warning for all those who worship the things of yesterday and refuse what is new, though it would be of little use, for that sort of human being is to be neither hindered nor shamed, still less exterminated. Whether the tenacious and intolerant conservatism of the Leipzigers was to blame for this disgrace or whether, as some surmised, the ground on which the young master seemed to stand firm and safe had really been undermined, is hard to determine; it may be supposed that both factors contributed to his defeat and that over-zealous disciples

of the "New-German School" endeavoured to bring about the fall of one who had so far enjoyed a great following with the aid of the petrified narrow-mindedness of a public vowed to the dead and of a servile critical fraternity. It was done either from disappointment at their failure to draw the newly-arisen conqueror into their circles or merely from common jealousy, much against the intentions and the will of their master, Liszt—and, be it understood, without his knowledge.

It is certainly suspicious that it was not his work alone that was abused. That would after all not have been surprising, for the Concerto, with its dark power and its subversive tragedy, could not help startling all those who were wont to expect a fascinating piece of bravura from a work of this kind. But the playing of the composer too, who must at least have been the authentic interpreter of his own music, received a scolding such as one cannot help regarding with consternation. That Brahms was no "piano virtuoso" is certain: he did not shine at the instrument—he made music; but his manner of doing this awakened the purest enthusiasm not only in Robert Schumann and his wife, who knew something about the matter too, but in every true musician of the time, and they all raved about the mastery of his wholly orchestral playing, the depth of his perception and the songfulness which his unique touch could lure from the keys. It is absurd to suppose that, with a work and on an occasion which must have meant everything to him, he could have performed indifferently, reluctantly, not to say negligently, and so it may well have been enmity that handled him in this fashion.

I heard Brahms play only in the last decade of his life, both in the concert room and in the circle of his friends, and heard him in a great variety of works:—his revised Trio in B major, his clarinet Sonatas, song accompaniments. His last monologues for piano—the profound and dream-steeped Op. 116, 117, and 119—were scarcely dry in the manuscript when I had the happiness to hear them from him in the intimacy of his room. Each time—and each time in a different way—he made an indelible impression upon me. He had by then given up all concert-giving and therefore all regular practice. His technique was equal to any difficulty encountered in his own works, but it was not dazzling; he would often play as if to himself and was

then capable of muttering the choicest things into his beard and failing to draw the least attention to them. His touch was sometimes hard when he played loudly, but in delicate passages magically fragrant, songful and rich in light and shade. It is certain that I never heard anyone else play Brahms's piano music as its creator played it himself, not even Ignaz Brüll, the interpreter from whom of all others he liked to hear his new works. The whole man was in the performance—and the whole work too: you possessed it from that moment, irrevocably. His playing, for all its reticence, was filled with song, there was in it a searching, a gliding of light and flitting of shadows, a flaring and burning out, a restrained masculine feeling and a self-forgetful, romantic passion such as I have never experienced elsewhere. He always played as if he were alone; he forgot his public entirely, sank into himself, gained new knowledge of his own tones in re-creating them, was lost to himself and to others. It was exactly the interpretation that fitted this music, the playing that characterized the unique personality of Johannes Brahms: frequently rugged and as it were ambling—"take it easy" was his most common tempo indication at rehearsals—then tender again and stealthy, and yet again soaring up into high flights, as if intoxicated with an interior light. More than once, during some sweetly melancholy passage did I see a gleam in the eyes of him who was decried as cold and inaccessible. Once, on going through his folksong arrangements at Ignaz Brüll's and coming upon the song of *The fair Jewess*, I saw the tears streaming down his cheeks; he turned away angrily and growled:—"Why must this thing always get hold of me so?" He was as single-minded in creating music anew by interpretation as anywhere else. He could not fritter himself away, and lived each moment intensely. Here lies the true secret of an artist's nature.

Brahms endured his Leipzig defeat calmly, even cheerfully. He had now tried out his work, he knew that he had given of his best and saw that it was good; an outward misfortune could thus no longer affect him. The letter he addressed to his friend Jussuf the next day shows good-humour and self-assured modesty such as few young artists could muster in a similar situation. "Still quite tipsy with the uplifting delights vouchsafed to my eyes and ears by the sight and the conversation of the

wiseacres of our musical city during the last few days, I constrain this pointed steel-pen by Sahr"—he wrote as a rule with quills cut by himself—"to describe to you how it happened and how it happily came to pass that my concert here proved a brilliant and decided—failure." He goes on to say that the performance was good, the orchestra excellent, that he played much better than in Hanover, that the rehearsals went off without any sort of response, and continues:—"The first and second movements were listened to without the least stir. At the close three pairs of hands made an attempt at falling slowly together, whereupon an unmistakable hissing arose on every side to forbid any such demonstration.—For the rest, there is nothing more to tell you about this event . . . This failure, I may say, made no impression whatever upon me, and what little bad humour and disenchantment I may have felt was dispelled when I listened to a C major Symphony by Haydn and to *The Ruins of Athens*. In spite of all, this Concerto will come to please one day, when I have improved the shape of its body, and a second one will sound quite otherwise.—I believe this is to be the best thing that could happen to anyone; it forces one's thoughts to concentrate properly and enhances one's courage. After all, I am still trying and groping. All the same, the hissing was rather too much."

Here was a man who had placed all his expectations upon one thing; he saw it wrecked, and through no fault of his. There is no need to spin words over him who, on the morning after so bitter a disappointment, could speak thus. He may serve as example for all who do not know what true artistry means; for those, too, who do not know how much moral force lived in Johannes Brahms.

For all that, the Leipzig experience did him little good. It began by being a set-back for him. The publishers shied at the sight of his music, and in himself there remained a sub-conscious feeling of resentment which continued to work in him and led him to take a step that had for its effect a turn in the line of his development, but also a self-mastery the result of which was the purest possible evolution of his being. It all seems conditioned by his will; but it was fateful.

VII

THE MANIFESTO OF THE FOUR

WHATEVER the superiority and the humour with which Brahms accepted the Leipzig defeat, and however he may have resolved, although aware of the injustice he had suffered, to derive no other lesson from it than that of the necessity to go on improving, it was bound to have after-effects of increasing bitterness and disappointment. It was once again time to set his teeth and to bury certain golden dreams. How much he had longed for their fulfilment may be judged from the fact that for once he did not see the New Year in with his family in Hamburg: he had gone straight to Göttingen from Detmold, unable any longer to bear missing Agathe's beloved face and voice, and had remained away from his people for the first time for many years in order to see the longed-for being again at last and to fill himself with dreams of a new hope. He had in the meantime heard from her through his young friend Meysenbug. It is significant that he did not personally exchange letters with her; he evidently feared to disclose prematurely what, of course, she had known for a long time. Even now, during those weeks at Göttingen, it remained unspoken, and after the Leipzig fiasco he was glad of it. He was able to take leave without a word of hopes and dreams which he knew were all too rash. The next meeting found him calm and outwardly unembarrassed. How much his heart ached nobody knows, though it may be read between the lines of many a letter. In the autumn of that year he copied the score of his second Serenade, in A major, and it is surely no mere coincidence that the key of this tender night music, offered to his beloved and filled with all his secret fervour, should agree with the initial of her cherished name. On telling his Hamburg friend, Karl Graedener that he is engaged in copying this work, he adds:—"It might well please a maiden. Doesn't do it, however." And in the

following winter, while in Detmold, he wrote in the apparently gayest frame of mind to a pretty acquaintance who, as Frau Bertha Faber, was to become a close friend of his in Vienna:—"I am in love with music, I adore music; I think of nothing else, or if I do so, it is only if it can heighten the beauty of music for me. Mark my words, I shall be writing love songs again, not addressed to A or Z, but to music." Even more clearly than the affecting sigh of resignation in the preceding letter, the defiance and forced mirth of his tone here shows how much he was on his guard against new fascinations to which he might succumb and how intent he was to drown the voices of his own heart. What heightened music's beauty for him was the picture that still remained before him in solitary hours, the picture to which he addressed his sweetest and most melancholy sounds.

How lovingly he wrote in his serenely contemplative *Serenade in A*—not to a portrait merely, but to the dear girl herself—is not only to be gathered from every bar of a work which to-day has the effect of a forgotten and delicious love-letter found in a grandfather's *escritoire*, full of confessions gracefully and longingly hidden under courteous and agreeable turns of phrase and under charmingly ornate allusions to the heart's secrets; it is a fact that Brahms was more closely and warmly attached to this "tender piece" than to any other composition of his. Only the *alto Rhapsody*,* that deeply moving avowal of loneliness, renunciation and, at the last, noble appeasement, he held equally dear. But even of this wonderfully serious work, which transcends all earthly sorrow, he never spoke so gladly as in the almost lover-like words addressed to Joachim:—"I have these days arranged my second *Serenade* for piano duet. Don't laugh, but it made me feel quite rapturous. I have rarely written down notes with such delight: the sounds penetrated me so lovingly and softly that I became glad through and through. I may add in all sincerity that my blissful feelings were by no means enhanced by any thought of myself as creator. But it was ridiculous, all the same." In a similar vein he wrote to Clara, to whom he does not seem ever to have addressed a line from Göttingen. He may have secretly feared to confuse his emotions and uneasily felt constrained to leave much unsaid, to express

* Op. 53.

himself evasively and suspect himself of being disingenuous. At times even his music seems to show how he withdraws before himself, so to speak, and avoids direct expression. All this, however, his music as well as what he said during his Göttingen period, tells us that his love for Agathe von Siebold was not a wildly flaming one, no torturing and destructive passion, but a temperate, steady fire whose extinction left no ashes behind. There was no sting in his renunciation, only that sweet sorrow which dissolves itself into rueless remembrance and in the end only speaks out of the wondrously eloquent sounds it has itself called forth.

After his lost battle of Leipzig, Brahms had gone to Hamburg. It was against his original intention, for he had at first thought of spending some time in Leipzig, where he wished to negotiate personally with his publishers and to induce them to issue new works of his. He had published nothing for five years and was anxious to break a silence urged upon him by the severity of his own conscience and by the demands he made on himself in his constant dissatisfaction, but the unduly long continuance of which could easily become serious. Now, after the failure of the piano Concerto and its interpreter, his self-consciousness forbade his approaching a publishing firm with any proposal—and the publishers kept silence. The path to Göttingen, too, was closed to him by his own pride. It was probably a feeling of the same nature, and certainly an unwillingness to hear words of consolation and encouragement, especially from those for whom he cared most, which made him disinclined to live at the same place as Joachim or Clara, which otherwise would have been the most natural and agreeable thing for him to do. Thus he decided in favour of Hamburg. It was at first far from pleasant for him there. With his parents he lived, he said, “as in a kitchen,” so tightly were they all packed together in their narrow lodgings; yet he would not hurt the old people by moving elsewhere, refrained “out of sheer delicacy” from seeking rooms for himself where he might have worked undisturbed, and so spoilt his own and the others’ temper. His ill-humour, rooted in things of the past and alleviated by no stimulating experience, was at last dispelled by two gratifying occurrences. His ill-treated piano Concerto was played by him at one of the

Philharmonic concerts with flattering success—no doubt the Hamburg public wished to repudiate the judgment of the Gewandhaus audience and afford satisfaction to their fellow-citizen—and he allowed himself to be dissuaded from the imprudence of having his first Serenade put into the same programme, which in spite of his being a “child of Hamburg” might have been regarded as presumptuous by the subscribers. But it was played soon afterwards at a concert organized by Brahms himself, which not only made a sensation by the collaboration of Joachim and Julius Stockhausen, but awakened true enthusiasm and moreover yielded a respectable material result, not a little to the amusement of Brahms, who was still far from blessed with this world’s goods. Stockhausen, the greatest *Lieder* singer of his time, the young master had met at the last Rhenish Musical Festival, together with Klaus Groth, the blunt and original peasant-poet of the *Quickborn*,* and the vocalist, who united soulfulness with the finest musical gifts and a unique intimacy and penetrating diversity of expression, had at once become ardently attached to the composer and his songs. The vocal music of Brahms was thenceforth for him the most enticing task and the chief object of his fervent devotion. “Whatever else one may sing next to it—he kills it all!” he exclaimed one day when, after a group of Schubert and Schumann, he sang—or rather lived—Brahms’s *Magelone* Romances to an assembly of friends. Stockhausen’s interpretation in song and oratorio, according to the testimony of the best judges, could not be otherwise described. He was a worthy member of an alliance that included a Brahms, a Joachim and a Clara Schumann. No wonder that his readiness to take part in the concert gave Brahms as much joy as that of Joachim, who with his violin set the whole audience afire and afterwards conducted his friend’s Serenade, which was received with much approbation. No wonder either that the recollection of the first co-operation of this triumvirate of artists, which was to be followed by many more, was a bright and pleasant one for Brahms for a long time to come.

A second event brought with it many enjoyable hours and much incitement to new labour. He had need of it, for he felt

* Literally “The Well-Spring,” Klaus Groth’s collection of poems in Low German.

—E.B.

S.B.

himself inwardly obstructed and unproductive. Life in his old home was inimical to his independence and he bruised himself in its constraint. Much as he would have liked to choose Hamburg as his final abode, he found it impossible to think of doing so in circumstances that oppressed him to the point of utter disinclination to work. No other solution was to be found so long as his parents were alive, and he would soon have been driven away again, had he not been held back by an occupation which in the meantime had begun to give him pleasure. He had been present at the wedding of a daughter of the clergyman of St. Michael's church, who had christened him long ago in the same place of worship, and a few singers of Graedener's vocal academy had sung a Motet composed by that musician for the occasion with such bell-like purity and sweetness that Brahms requested them to let him study and perform with them in the church three of his sacred choruses, an *Ave Maria*, a *Bone Jesu*, and an *Adoramus*. The ladies eagerly welcomed the suggestion, did their work well, and after two rehearsals the choruses were so beautifully sung by these twenty-eight voices that Brahms proposed that they should keep together and institute weekly practices under his direction. Thus originated the Hamburg Ladies' Choir, whose statutes, drawn up in the mediæval style of a guild's charter or a legal document, are an example of Brahms's singular humour. This was music-making calculated to give equal pleasure to conductor and performers, as is gloriously proved by the works for female chorus and the folksong arrangements which owe their existence to this happy joint activity and among which the choruses for women's voices with accompaniment for harp and two horns are the most original in their magic quality of sound and in that musing and introspection that characterizes many pieces by Brahms. Without his "little choral society," the master would long have left Hamburg for some sylvan solitude or another. Still more readily would he have sought his friend and lightened his over-full heart, for he must have felt tragically alone at that time. But Joachim was once again in England.

At the choral practices, in spite of the most serious and relentlessly careful work, a tone of engaging gaiety and waggish irony prevailed, and they gave so much pleasure to their conductor

that he was grievously hurt by the offer of an honorary salary, but preserved a silver inkpot presented to him by the grateful singers as a cherished memento. The meetings lasted until the summer, and then came the parting. Brahms was obliged to go to Detmold again, though for the last time. How much he was admired in Hamburg may be judged from the fact that his works were never to be had there; they always went out of stock at once and the poor music dealers had much trouble with them. And he in turn was much attached to his ladies' choir; he became almost tender when he spoke of those devoted women. The choral lessons at Detmold, once his greatest pleasure in that residence of the Sleeping Beauty, were spoilt for him by his longing for his dear and very much more capable ladies of Hamburg. Altogether, he came to feel the bondage and the emptiness of his court service more distressingly than ever before. It is true that, contemptuous as he was of etiquette, he was regarded with forbearance if he came to hold his rehearsals with the court ladies without a necktie; but not even the assurance of a fixed salary could tempt him to spend another of those dreary and profitless winters. He declined the Prince's next invitation politely, but with decision. An incident, negligible though it be, may be cited as significant of the paltry narrowness and the anything but munificent disposition of his exalted employers, in fact as typical of his position at Detmold, where he was to all appearances honoured, but in reality only used and exploited as an ornament. He was in raptures over a Christmas present sent to him by her Serene Highness, his pupil, the first six volumes so far published of the great Leipzig Bach edition, and rejoiced beyond measure in the possession of his most deeply beloved master's works. But he discovered later on that the subscription to all the instalments of this monumental complete edition that were to follow had not been taken out in the name of the Princess, but in his own. Until his death Brahms was obliged to pay himself for all the new volumes of a publication that is as expensive as it is magnificent. That he did so gladly, since this possession was an incomparable treasure for him, is another matter.

Before each visit to Detmold, he again and again considered the question of settling down there permanently; but he had no sooner arrived than he became restive and could hardly wait for

the moment of departure. And this time he was determined that there should be no return. With much trouble he got through this profitless period by completing the scoring of the second Serenade, by sending, as often as he could, new settings of folksongs to the "little republic" of his dear Hamburg ladies, without ever inquiring again after the fate of these trifles, and by spending New Year of 1860 at Detmold, much to his annoyance, because a deduction would actually have been made from his pay for a short holiday to be spent in Hamburg. But in his very first hour of freedom he left post-haste. First he went to his native city, where the second Serenade found a truly heartfelt echo, then to Joachim at Hanover. He had shortly before had the pleasurable surprise of finding his friend, whom he supposed to be still in England, in his room at Detmold. He now had important matters to discuss with him which had already ripened into a resolution during that meeting at Detmold. An additional attraction was a command by the King of Hanover, suggested by Clara Schumann and seconded by Joachim, to perform the second Serenade before him. But this was by the way: another question claimed his attention more urgently.

It must be said at once that Brahms was so pure and genuine a man and artist through and through, so disinterested and high-minded, that there can be no question of regarding personal rancour or the effect of any painful experience whatsoever as the motive for his attitude in matters of life, much less in matters of art. Besides, he had some right to be unjust. A genius may decline all that is uncongenial, even to the point of opposing an alien genius with all the vehemence of his being; he may turn with the utmost decision against anything that seems to him destructive to the cause he serves and to the dignity of his art. But he must grant the same right to his opponent and respect a conviction that runs counter to his own, so long as he has not proved its worthlessness or dishonesty. This obligation is the greater when a combat of this kind is fought out in public. Wagner, who to be sure stood more dangerously exposed to the cross-fire than any musician before or since, committed the most serious faults in this respect. His conduct towards Brahms is a case in point. His only excuse is the fact that one great person-

ality almost invariably faces another at best without comprehension, at worst with bitter aversion, if their paths diverge. And after all, Wagner's spiteful attacks, unworthy as they were of a great master and a great man, were but the echo that came back out of the forest into which Brahms and his companions had shouted their unmannerly challenge.

For that is what they did in the fatal "declaration" directed against Liszt and his supposed "school of New German Music" which, quite irrespective of the questionable justification of such a protest in general and of its fitness in this particular case, was framed so clumsily and offensively as to invite both an intentional and a deliberate misunderstanding. The fact that the document mentioned no names and made only a general attack on a "tendency" and on the works of its leaders, disciples and theorists, left each reader free to imagine against whom it was directed, and though Brahms was convinced that no honest man could interpret it as being aimed at Wagner or Berlioz, since "only Lisztian messes" might be dismissed in such a manner, it was nevertheless clear that this sleight-of-hand was actually accomplished. The shrewdest way in which the shaft could be deflected from Liszt to Wagner was that of ridiculing the declaration and discrediting it as a presumptuous absurdity. This may have been done in all good faith, for the contentions of that time, engaged in with terrifying violence, with unmeasured exasperation and with the least permissible means, not excluding calumny and invective, raged around Wagner and not around Liszt. As a composer, Liszt was taken seriously by few; his larger works were rarely performed, and he kept in the background with the proud and disillusioned expression of "I can wait!" He always made way for the gifts of others, and not only for people of genius.

For Brahms he seems to have been the foul fiend incarnate. Again and again his "fingers itched to pick a quarrel and to write against Liszt," and apart from the fact that he could have done this, and actually did do it, most convincingly and victoriously by means of his own music, it is extremely surprising in one who was otherwise peaceable enough and anxious to go his own way, unmolested and unmolesting. That he thought Liszt's work bad could not be the only reason. Poor music was at all times, and

not least in his own, written by all sorts of people, and that a journal should be found ready to propagate it should at most have moved him to a philosophic and ironic smile, more especially on account of the amusing circumstance that it was the same paper which had published Schumann's flaming annunciation of the young Brahms and which had since then said much that was appreciative of his work. And yet his irritation with Liszt as a composer worked itself up in the course of years into a kind of monomania. When two short works by Liszt, *Lenore* and the *Loreley*, were performed in Hamburg, Brahms raged, found that these "so-called decent concerts" had apparently lost their decency, and thundered on in this wise:—"So I expect him (Otten, the director of the Philharmonic organization) to give us one of the symphonic poems before long and am vexed that the plague continues to spread and the public's asses' ears grow even longer." (But let us remember that these symphonic poems were at first laughed at.) He urged Joachim to cast off his reserve and to hit out. "The compositions grow more and more appalling: look at *Dante*, for instance! . . . It would be splendid if you . . . were to kill these people with a few strokes of your bow, while I sat looking on with glee and helped by writing music." His more cautious friend was clearly still hesitating. As much as three years earlier, on the occasion of an article directed against Liszt by the complacent Rhenish manufacturer of music, Ferdinand Hiller, Joachim had considered it to be unwise to start a quarrel with the "party." "The people in Liszt's camp," he wrote, "are too glib with the pen, too continually lying in ambush, too rude and specious, and Liszt knows altogether too well how to inspire enthusiasm and how to misuse it for his own purposes, to make any honest fight with these bacchic sycophants possible." It is an accusation of the royally minded man and artist in Liszt to which the man and artist in Joachim should never have allowed himself to stoop and which is not to be justified. Not a single case can be proved in which Liszt excited enthusiasm otherwise than by his fascinating personality or misused it by any practice that was below himself. Yet Joachim, who knew very well that true worth is not to be nullified by any attack and that whatever is worthless must inevitably fall back into nothingness whether attacked or not, was

right in thus making his standpoint clear:—"But then, there is no need for it. Their gross fanaticism and their false harmonies will of themselves dig them a pitfall. Let it but be your care that more agreeable and joyous sounds should be heard after their noise." * This was the only wise counsel and the only one worthy of a creative artist.

But during their personal association in the Hanoverian days of 1860 Brahms changed his friend's view with his impassioned persuasions. He drove him to draft a manifesto of protest against the hated New Germans. Joachim drew it up together with the excellent Breslau musician Bernhard Scholz, and then came discussions, revisions and solicitations for signatures that lasted for months. Brahms demanded that Liszt's name should be mentioned, lest they should be accused of "obduracy against Wagner," even though he fancied that the tendency of the whole could not be misinterpreted. He also took exception to the word "aberrations" contained in the first version:—"About aberrations' etc., one may dispute and quarrel, but it is not for such as 'ourselves to engage in scientific debates over such muck." † And he insisted that for the compositions of those who were to be attacked the contemptuous word "productions" should be used in preference to "works." Liszt's name was after all omitted in the end, and the "declaration," sent in hectographic duplicates to those who were asked to sign it, read as follows:—

"The undersigned have long followed with regret the pursuits of a certain party, whose organ is Brendel's *Zeitschrift für Musik*.

"The above journal continually spreads the view that musicians of more serious endeavours are fundamentally in accord with the tendencies it represents, that they recognize in the compositions by the leaders of this group works of artistic value, and that altogether, and especially in North Germany, the contentions for and against the so-called music of the future are concluded and the dispute settled in its favour.

"To protest against such a misrepresentation of facts is regarded as their duty by the undersigned, and they declare that, so far at least as they are concerned, the principles stated by Brendel's journal are not recognized and that they regard the productions of the leaders and pupils of the so-called

* Obviously an allusion to the recitative in Beethoven's ninth Symphony:—*O Freunde, nicht diese Töne! sondern lasst uns angenehmere anstimmen, und freudenvollere.*—E.B.

† This is putting it mildly; Brahms is untranslatable.—E.B.

‘New German’ school, which in part simply re-enforce these principles in practice and in part again and again enforce new and unheard-of theories, as contrary to the innermost spirit of music, strongly to be deplored and condemned.”

JOHANNES BRAHMS.
JOSEPH JOACHIM.
JULIUS OTTO GRIMM
BERNHARD SCHOLZ

A couple of dozen signatures were to follow; but they were not yet collected when the manifesto appeared in the *Berlin Echo*, with the names of the four proponents alone. Even if the whole attack had been capable of producing any effect, it was destroyed by this premature publication and the cause was surrendered to public derision. It remains unknown to the present day who was the traitor.

Had the “declaration” appeared with all the signatures, it would have failed of its purpose and remained a blunder hard to repair. It could have been justified only as a reply to another, signed by the name of Wagner or Liszt, if not both. As a counterblast to a journalistic article, or even to a whole series of such articles, it was an act of consequential folly, if only because such weighty names as those of Brahms and Joachim were thus opposed to that of an irresponsible scribbler. The savage defence was aimed over the heads of obscure manufacturers of copy at the masters, who could not be made responsible for the lucubrations of their partisans, while the signatories of the declaration had themselves to bear the responsibility for their words.

It would have been different, and certainly better, though hardly more just or wise, if Brahms had possessed the courage of self-esteem and engaged in the combat single-handed. His name by itself would have given a very different aspect to this call to battle, which would have looked more significant, less questionable and less arrogantly meddlesome. For it may well be asked whether anybody except Brahms really had any right to so aggressive and judicial an action. This is true not only of all the other suggested signatories, such as Kirchner, Reinecke, Gade and Bargiel—to name only the best of them—whose pleasing, sometimes very delightful reflexions of Mendelssohn

and Schumann the world has mostly forgotten by this time; it is eminently true also of the other three proponents, not excluding Joachim himself, who in this case could only figure as composer and was as such a personality of prodigious dullness and sterile striving after greatness. Nor should he for this reason alone have felt akin to Liszt, whom he accused of the very same defects, but also in his tragic position of the virtuoso who composes, for the sake of whose mastery of his instrument one consents to forgive the whim of creation. As for the other two, they have been preserved from entire oblivion only by Brahms and his friendship for them: "Ise," the by no means "grim" though capital man and musician Julius Otto Grimm, and Bernhard Scholz, an honest and reliable but far from important composer and conductor, whose memory lives at best as that of a capable pedagogue. Their names and those of all the others are faded; the name of Franz Liszt shines to-day in undiminished lustre.

All this will have to be decided by the future. For us Liszt stands erect as the figure of a pioneer, Brahms as that of a custodian of precious possessions. But even those who are most deeply attached to the music of Brahms, much more closely than to that of Liszt, the external pomp and the gilt-edged sentimentality of which stands in such strange contrast with its delivery out of a painfully wrestling soul, must seriously question, when it is a case of discussing, not the specific worth of their respective work, but its importance for the development and the future of music, which of the two masters can be more readily imagined as missing in the history of the art of sound and which of the two has fertilized music more definitely. It will scarcely be denied that the strongest impulse emanated from Liszt, that the music of to-day—and one need not think of Richard Strauss alone in this connexion—shows a very different face because of his presence, and that it cannot be imagined just as it is without him, no matter whether this be all to the good or otherwise. Brahms hardly had any influence of this sort. Nevertheless, this is true: if we loaded one scale with the whole of Liszt's works and placed in the other a page from Brahms's chamber music, from the Requiem, or from the *Four Serious Songs*, that containing the tone-poetry of Liszt would rise up with a jerk. Such is the tragedy of the pioneer.

All this belongs to the past—and awaits the judgment of the

future. For us who live in the present only one thing matters in the whole pitiful case: the elucidation of motives which may contribute to our perception of Brahms's nature and the examination of the inward and outward consequences of a step he took, not in a moment of spontaneous and thoughtless agitation, but after long consideration and in the face of many qualms. It was a step, I am convinced, which had a decisive influence upon his work, for from that time on he more and more consciously silenced the extravagantly romantic voices of his heart and became the guardian of music's temple and the keeper of music's seal. It therefore will not do to dismiss with a few words of embarrassment this "unfortunate declaration," which might otherwise have been regarded as a settled affair of the past and as one of those *grosses bêtises* which from time to time happen to every spirited artistic personality. Wagner's much misunderstood *Judaism in Music* was another of them and it had a similar, though more conspicuous, effect.

It may well be asked whence came this incredible irritability and this unrelenting, almost peevish aggressiveness in one usually so little given to quarrelling as Brahms, whose manly reticence and incapacity for hatred and injustice were the finest traits in his simple, kind and magnanimous character. Here he was neither kind nor magnanimous. Expressions such as he uses with regard to Liszt are to be found in none of his many thousands of letters. One speaks in this way only of people who stand in one's way or concerning whom one is troubled by a bad conscience. It may have been that the nameless—in every sense of the word—malignities that came from the hostile camp and the recollection of the Leipzig failure, in which some blindly furious Lisztians certainly had a share, still raged in him without his being clearly aware of it; but he must also have been anxious, equally unconsciously, to prove that he was not unjustified that day when he went to sleep during Liszt's B minor Sonata. Johannes Brahms was a human being, not a saint on a pedestal, and such small all-too-human motives may well have had a share in his attitude, though it is certain that he had himself no suspicion of anything of the kind and would have bitten off his own tongue rather than utter a single word of animosity, had he caught himself harbouring any such idea. That on the occasion of the manifesto

he saw himself merely as the bearer of a commission and gave vent to his conviction regardless of the consequences, can only be doubted by those inspired by a mean party spirit. The fact is, of course, that such manipulators of feeling do exist. But Brahms's truly determining reason may have to be sought in a very different direction: he would at all costs have a rupture, would of set purpose create an irrevocable situation that should keep him once and for all from seeking to return to the Venusberg. The fear that he might yet lose himself in the uncharted seas of the "music of the future," or rather of the music of Wagner, with its unbridled lure of the senses, its intoxicated ecstasies and its almost obscene transports, may have been matched by that of becoming too softhearted and indulgent before the magic of the Klingsors of music and succumbing to it unless he deliberately affronted them. Those who listen to the F minor Sonata, the B major Trio, the first movement of the piano Concerto, and much else in the early music of Brahms will be suddenly struck by surprising affinities with Wagner's work and become aware of a blazing and revelling, an intoxicating surcharge of hot desire, a self-dissolving and self-forgetting in superabundant sorrow of love, a wholly unrestrained flooding of voices poured from a young heart in its need and longing—things which Wagner himself could not utter with a greater dream-rapture and a fierier languor. Many passages in these works might be found bodily in Wagner, and what is more, are actually found there. Against this delight in squandering himself, in romantic mysticism, in a sensuous and supersensuous cult of dreams, Brahms fought all his life. To the fact that he submitted to it again and again we owe the overpowering wonders of his musical beauties, particularly in his later works; but here no doubt lies the hidden cause of his attitude, and especially that of the fatal overshadowing of his own self.

The tragedy of a soul and a character so simple, straightforward and healthy, so infinitely manifold and contradictory, is this: he was ever on his guard against the best things in his life, ever in flight before the fairest impulses of his being. Happily for him, and for us, they frequently caught him up; but even then he subdued them into forms and expressions not perhaps inevitably called for by his particular language of sound,

which may have been the cause of much oblique and ambiguous criticism on the part of his contemporaries, and not always the most worthless among them. Friedrich Nietzsche, to be sure goes far astray with his brilliantly malicious sally of "the melancholy of impotence," with which he fancies he is dismissing Brahms, as he does in the sentence, "he does not create out of fullness, but thirsts after fullness;" but it was to become more and more indicative of the nature of Brahms's music that he sought to conceal his riches and appeared most economical precisely where he took his inspiration out of the fullest abundance. While others erected ostentatious frontages with no building behind them out of a few bricks of thought, Brahms grew increasingly ascetic, sifted more and more severely the invention that would flow copiously to the end of his life, and tended to banish the most fascinating among the ideas he would finally accept into the subterranean passages of his wondrous structures, which at first sight often present an uninviting front, but whence none take leave who have once entered.

It is time to interrupt the romance of his life and to let the works created up to this point give their testimony first of all—the intimate happenings they reveal, the growing mastery of genius which blossoms forth from them ever more richly and mysteriously, the artist's existence of which they are the magic mirror.

VIII

FIRST INTERLUDE OF THE WORKS

GUSTAV MAHLER once said:—"I only compose when I experience—and I only experience when I compose." That is true of all creative musicians. Form, however severely constructed, becomes for them a symbol, a reflexion of everyday existence; their own intimate life is uttered in the content of sound. Like Beethoven, Brahms was incapable of producing music without seeing with his mind's eye a picture, an event, a landscape, a vision of actual or imagined occurrence. This has nothing to do with the kind of programme music that follows and illustrates a given subject. It is a shaping of inward happenings. I do not believe, as Kalbeck did, that the first piano Concerto illustrated Schumann's fall into the Rhine or that the third Symphony represents a Niederwald monument * in sound, which in that case would have turned out far too small. Thought and truth alone are there.

The mature Brahms was a conclusion, not a new beginning. This is not to be guessed from his early works. They are full of stress and unruliness, premonitory of dawn and the break of a new day; they burst forth from the deep-hidden springs of folk-song and drag Beethovenish boulders along with them. Too many attempts have been made to prove these first songs, sonatas, variations and ballades dependants on Schumann, to represent Brahms, in fact, as the heir of that master, to whom he came as a finished musician and whose work, as we know, only revealed itself to him on his visit to the composer he had at first misunderstood. To try and discover any influence or imitation in this connexion is the purest ineptitude, contradicted by every known fact. If the two are at all akin to each other by nature,

* The gigantic statue of Germania by Johannes Schilling at Niederwald in Hesse-Nassau, commemorating the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.—E.B.

the relation is merely that of two people who were brought up in the same place without being aware of each other's existence, and who afterwards settled in different countries. Both come from the realm of Beethoven and Schubert; but Schumann's world is the wonderland of night, while Brahms lives in the hours of first dawn and sunrise. Schumann is an out-and-out romantic, a necromancer, awake to the voices of fairy-tales; in his music ruined castles stand in the moonlight, their courtyards astir, the witch Loreley beckons with her white hand; he is as a candle left alight after daybreak; Jean Paul, E.T.A. Hoffmann and Eichen-dorff live again in his sounds; his humorsome wilfulness, the entrancing moods, now of oddity and now of childlike roguery, produced by the high spirits to which he is roused from his rapt melancholies, the passionate sincerity and the jubilant fervour of his melody make of him, who was no architect in tones but a miniaturist, the unique, touching and beloved figure of the greatest dreamer in music, the profoundest minstrel of legends and singer of fair women. Brahms reigns in a wholly different domain. He is a Hölderlin soul, though one of Hebbel's force and ruggedness; a bright-eyed German youth who looks upon the world with "romantic views," full of innocence and defiant belief in life, the purest Michel Hellriegel * who accompanies his life musically on his ocarina, though for Brahms it would be rather a clarinet or a horn, but who has no need to become blind to the light of day in order to grow even more clear-sighted and knowing and ever inwardly brighter. Already in his early works the impetuosity of the minnesinger in him is allied to the formative, organizing power of a great cathedral builder, and these qualities present a unity of compelling inspiration and rich construction; they truly impress the hearer as a counterpart in sound of the glorious works by the mediæval builders of Cologne. These sounds speak so immediately to those who can live them again and in their superabundance, which has no patience with limitations, in their luxuriant blossoming and displaying, are sung so wholly from out the depths of our own needs and longings that we cannot help feeling how a single step more would take us straight into Wagner's world of emotional expression. Later

* The figure of the ideal German youth in Gerhart Hauptmann's dramatic fairy tale, *Und Pippa tanzt*.—E.B.

on, it is true, they are to be masked more and more carefully by severe and stylized forms, just as Brahms liked to mask his own secret feelings by an ever more reticent taciturnity. He became less approachable year by year, more turned in upon himself and carefully guarded. The soaring pathos which at first rose up so mighty and unconstrained, with such deep breaths and rushing beat of wings, became the pathos of distance.

To eliminate at once the possibility of misunderstanding, however, let it be said that it would be foolish to suppose that this change came overnight or could be traced to any particular hour. A line of development is never so steady and unbroken, nor are the evolutions of an artist's soul enacted so simply. In spite of the inevitability of what happened, it must not be imagined that Johannes Brahms, who was far too proud to become a mere follower of however great a model, decided one fine day to suppress everything in his work that pointed to the future, to forswear the deep-felt abundant ecstasies and luxuries, where tonal expression spontaneously created its own adequate forms, and that he became all at once converted to the laws inherited from the forefathers as the only means of grace, in order to show that great things, nay grandiose and new music could be achieved within the fast and immovable bounds set by the symphonic form consecrated by Beethoven. But he did show that too, and the more admirably and impressively the closer he traced these bounds. It will be impossible not to perceive, in some at least of the works of his period of depression, a deliberate though never doctrinal insistence of the heir who acquires in order to possess. However, these developments did not occur simply and in a straight line. Not only did the works of his youth, for all their overflowing of the fundamental demarcations, already possess such demarcations unmistakably, but the will to create balance and technical unity appear recognizably; altogether, nothing happened in a single day. And above all, this consolidation of the bulwark of the fortress of form conquered by the master was surely not at first a consequence of reflection, but came about from an inner necessity and only grew into a conscious declaration of faith under the stress of later experiences, æsthetic considerations no less than exasperation with those who, according to his view, had gone disastrously astray. Let it be said at once that

his energy is so uncanny, he is so possessed of a noble passion for perfection and so stirring in his tough forging and riveting strength, that there is nowhere a contradiction between content and form: it is all inwardly bound together; everything that is formally intractable is overcome by living connexions, and the organic features are controlled down to the most insignificant detail in such a way that the result is complete oneness of the inward character and the outward shape. With all that, the hearer may be right in regarding many of these works as colder, more contemplative and objective because so much living force and warmth has been consumed and gone up in smoke for the sake of obviating these antithetical factors, or in feeling that these glorious and splendidly presented inspirations might have been sung forth more freely and rung out in a still prouder deployment, though they would not then have made their effect by that faultless purity of line to which Brahms constrained them. If less pure, they would have been stronger, more enrapturing and unforgettable—more like the works of his arrival. Here is melancholy indeed, not of impotence, but of potency.

These works—the Sonatas, the B major Trio, the first piano Concerto—are overwhelming in their undefiled young beauty and power, their inner storm and thunder, their abundant shower of rich blossoms. They are the most wonderful beginning ever made by any master: no other started with such decision, and hardly one so weightily. Even to-day, on hearing them we are seized by the bold certainty of advance and the astonishingly daring assertiveness with which a touchingly inexperienced youth ventured to speak in his own idiom of sound. Whether we understand it or not, we can well imagine that it must have impressed all like a new sunrise, though there was more tempest than sunshine in this first music. Here we come upon another peculiarity: the uniformity of musical expression within one and the same period. It looks as if certain melodic and harmonic elements floated in the atmosphere of the time; there is no other explanation for the appearance of passages belonging, so to speak, to the same family in works by contemporaries who know nothing of each other. At the time he worked at these youthful compositions, Johannes Brahms was as little aware of Chopin as of Schumann, and yet speaks in the E flat minor Scherzo, with

its centaur's sprawl, as one who knew the lightning manner of those spurting, clutching and scattered Scherzos by Chopin and as one who wished to demonstrate in his own way the inclination to jest with terrors and to represent vitriolic attacks as a grimly humorous pastime. Again, in his F sharp minor Sonata, there is something of that dislocation of the soul, that febrile and faltering passion and those sudden drops into contemplation, as well as of that subsiding into the candid tone of folksong-like romances found in Schumann's Sonata in the same key, with which he did not become acquainted until later. But these are special cases: in general a language of sound is uttered here which seems to perpetuate something of the manly energy and vehemence of Beethoven's "middle period," although it is entirely Brahmsian even in his highly characteristic harmony and combinations. Here already we have the development of thematic fragments into broadly discharged formations; the manner of heightening the tension of a melody by means of urging triplets and of at once hindering and impatiently driving it onward by stubborn syncopation; the predilection for handfuls of orchestral harmonies and for chords of the sixth; the refractory rhythms and displacements; the veiling and at the same time enhancing of a theme by accompanying upper parts in thirds or sixths, which have the effect of a mysterious appearance of some lovely figure as in a mirage. The composer's physiognomy was from the first unmistakably marked out. To be sure, his heraldic sign of F.A.F. (or rather its chordal formation, for it scarcely occurs in his music as a melodic sequence) is as yet absent; the first works that wear it on their face are those written after he had made the acquaintance of Joachim.

He was right in beginning with the C major Sonata as his Op. 1, contrary to Schumann's advice: it shows from the first bar a Titan's brow. Kalbeck interpreted the main theme by the words, "Up, and out into venture!"* which not only matches the rhythm but the bold life-defiance of his mood most happily. The mighty blow of the Beethovenian paw with which it opens fells resistance to the ground. Its affinity with the chief theme of the *Hammerclavier* Sonata is undeniable and has been as often pointed out as that between the finale in Brahms's C minor Sym-

* Literally, "Up! Out into life!" but this does *not* match the rhythm.—E.B.

phony and Beethoven's *Hymn to Joy* or the echo of Mendelssohn in the last movement of the C minor Quartet; so often, in fact, that a word concerning Brahmsian reminiscences had better be said here. They occur extraordinarily rarely with him, much less than with most masters, although he once accused himself, in a letter to Dessoff, who had expressed his scruples concerning a passage borrowed from Brahms for one of his own songs, that he too "had on occasion stolen, and far more seriously." The hunt after such quotations, which must occur to every composer now and again without his being aware of the fact, is one of the most stupid and anti-musical of practices. It is not the identity of a few notes that matters, but the uniqueness of a personality. In Brahms, however, there are conscious reminiscences—secret greetings to cherished masters, all manner of quotations with a meaning always more or less hidden and always delightful. That this very first theme, though its analogy is merely rhythmic, is an acknowledgment of faith in Beethoven on the part of one who stands in need of no dependence, is not to be doubted. Brahms had a blunt answer ready to meet such cases. When a musical wiseacre of his acquaintance expressed his enthusiasm over the C minor Symphony and added that it was only regrettable that the theme of the finale was so like the one in the ninth Symphony, Brahms looked the gentleman up and down and replied rudely:—"Yes, and still more regrettable that any ass can see it at once." Sigmund Bachrich, the late admirable violinist of the Rosé Quartet, which the master liked to entrust with the first performance of new works, told me that he was made to swallow the same retort when he attempted to draw Brahms's attention to a similarity of this sort. It is indeed to be supposed that so self-critical a composer as Brahms was himself aware of things of that kind and that he would not have passed them unless he intended to express or secretly interweave something of particular import. This is nearly always the case, and several instances will be referred to. They all have their charm, either as entries in a musician's diary, as concealed messages or as the little mystifications of which Brahms was so fond, especially when, much to his gratification, nobody discovered them. That he not only sounded, in the Schumann Variations, a delicate homage to that master in one of the middle parts, but

secretly added another for Clara by working in one of her own themes and letting it deliver a tender message, has already been hinted at.

But he was especially partial to allusions of this kind by means of quotations from folksongs or covert variants of their tunes. In the very first Sonata occur two of them:—in the delicately elegiac andante the old song, “Secretly rises the moon: blue, blue floweret,” becomes the theme for closely worked variations, while in the finale, which leaps up wildly in double sixths, we hear, at first sung from an oppressed breast and afterwards more freely, like a reverberation, “My heart’s in the highlands,”—a recollection rather than a direct reference. Then, in the F sharp minor Sonata, of which the principal theme, dark and craggy, broad and weighty, is the most significant in the three Sonatas, the old song of Toggenburg complains softly under its breath in the andante:—“How sad I am that winter has made bare both wood and heath.” Folk-like, too, are the simple verses set at the head of the andante in the F minor Sonata, bearing the poet’s name of Sternau:—“Dusk approaches, the moon is shining, here are two people in love entwining, and blessedly united.” This is one of Brahms’s most wonderful tone-poems, a love-scene of inexpressible magic, charged with a youthful sensuousness wholly free from all that is sultry, spellbound by the moon and by dreams, a rapturously melancholy duet in the shadow of gabled houses, among the sounds of softly plashing fountains and village church-bells; the two lovers letting their voices stream forth into the clear night, assured in their happiness and their warm awareness of each other and intensifying their song in an after-strain of indescribable tenderness. Over the throbbing A flat in the bass it planes on in a tranquil folksong romance, then swells to an affirmation of love raised heaven-high, only to die away like a wordless vow with the gentle, warmhearted initial theme. It is incomparable. Voice of nature, song of the soul: there is no thought of “art.” Here is lyricism of the highest type such as Johannes Brahms himself did not often surpass.

Profoundly affecting is the transformation of the same theme in the *Rückblick*, where it becomes a disconsolate funeral march in a dark B flat minor: all these young hopes are carried to their

grave. In between comes the vehemently upsurging and down-plunging scherzo with the confident and consolidating song of its trio. More than this, there are the first and last movements: the former with its onrushing, jagged principal theme, which takes breath again and again in order to demand space more and more imperatively; with its powerful chordal blows at the climax of which we seem to perceive a gleam of the symbol F.A.F. (though it is F.A.b.F. here) through the quivering descents of passing notes; with its urging, continually interrupted development, its violently agitated and steeply mounting song theme, its wide-spanned chords crashing down a distance of more than two octaves, its mystic working-out section, and the triumphant obliviousness of the close, which is also that of the whole work; and then the finale, thematically related at first to the initial movement in its vigorous, reckless onset, its middle portion, beginning in calm ecstasy and climbing higher and higher in its growing excitement, its song scattering itself into volatile quavers in the stretto-like presto, until the dithyrambic, sorrow-conquering sounds borrowed from the end of the first movement lead to the close. An unforgettable work, full of youth and love, expectation of sorrow and resolution in the face of circumstance; above all, full of music—music bubbling over, intoxicated with song, deeply felt and stirring. This is the truest Brahms—unclear as yet, impetuous and prodigal, but with all his bewildering lavishness inwardly well ordered. Whoever seeks the real Brahms may find him here.

He may be found, too, in the first version of the magnificently unrestrained B major Trio which he completely altered in his master years, and again, perhaps more expansive than anywhere else, and for that very reason more touching and lovable, in the first movement of the D minor piano Concerto. After that, the second movement is nobly tranquillizing in the serious and elevated mood created by its quiet pacing along in a solemn, measured 6-4 motion, and the soliloquies of the piano, lost in dreams and breathed out of a constricted breast, are filled with romantic sweetness in this *Benedictus* message that took the place of the funeral march later incorporated in the *German Requiem*, a gruesomely repressed and thus the more terrifying and oppressive movement. The third is one of those rondos where Brahms

seems to turn with a careless "Ah, well!" from cramping pain and from the sorrowful stations on his bitter journey and to go to meet life bravely in a mood of heedless levity, at first ambling vigorously, as it was his habit in maturer years, afterwards striding on more energetically and singing a fresh and fiery marching song with his head in the air, and at last taking the summit of the mountainous range suddenly by storm. But the first movement—I had almost said the first act—is the fateful cry and tragedy of a lonely soul, wavering alarmingly in its crises and reversals between dread visions, deadly fevers, mighty wrestlings and communings with the voices of the abyss. A conjuring of lovely and deceptive phantoms, a flight into calmer regions where hope still lingers and oblivion in hours of rich promise is still granted; and then again a ruthless awakening to the persistent struggle against the powers of life of one who is too soft of heart and too lost in dreams, and so to the majestic and tenebrous ending. Thus is the mood of this gigantic movement unfolded. All this is expressed through an immense dialogue between orchestra and piano: the drama with its tensions and catastrophes is enacted in the orchestra and provides a background for the subjective feelings of pensive expectation, soft melancholy and tenderly exalted, almost moonstruck somnambulistic fancies, poured forth in unfettered pianistic monologues. And ever again there is the grip and release as of octopus arms, a hand-to-hand struggle with shattering chords for Titanic weapons. It is as if a whole world of tumult and affliction had been traversed, and this is what gives this pianistic symphony its dark heroic beauty. How admirably it is all forged and chained together, one theme growing organically out of another, all things inter-related. It is a structure wrought of iron, overgrown with tendrils of ivy. The broad orchestral introduction is in itself a symphony and as it were an effigy of the "ill-fated Atlas:"* above the rumbling kettledrums the main theme deals slashing sword strokes with its spread chords of the sixth on the tonic of D minor—it is a curious and not yet investigated fact that all truly symphonic and plastic themes are based either on the common chord or on consecutive notes of the diatonic scales)—it falls downward in

* Heine's "*unglücksel'ger Atlas*," familiar to musicians from the eighth song in Schubert's *Schwanengesang*.—E.B.

successions of fierce shakes, as if hitting out right and left, and merges into a pleading melody that takes up and continues the last note of the third bar and the first note of the fourth in the chief theme. The motto of "free but glad" (*frei, aber froh*: F#. A. F#.) seems to sink into despondency. A second theme, timidly sung by clarinets and bassoons and tremulously accompanied by violins and violas, has grown out of the jerking descent of shakes; it is as if an insolent face had suddenly become meek and suppliant. The same formation of notes produces the challenging, detached and aggressive quavers in the strings which follow the canonically contracted return of the main theme and then, after a fanfare-like call to battle from woodwind and violins, shatter themselves into fragments. The remaining small motif, which seems to continue a defiant mockery with its four notes, —three quavers and a crotchet, as if it provokingly called "Come, if you dare!"—is taken up and developed by the piano when it enters at last; but it is now dreamily soft and elegiac, moving pensively in thirds and sixths and soaring upward with a gentle beating of wings. It merges into the pleading song already heard and afterwards consolidates itself in a new theme full of reassuring hope, which marches on with the tranquil solemnity of a procession, the bass following at half a bar's distance, like some shadowy companion. Here again one is tempted to add words:—"Father and Lord, oh, grant me Thy peace and let me in silence accomplish my labour." Then comes a hushing of the lone voice, as if at the sight of a heavenly apparition that brings fulfilment: the mettlesome fanfare is soothed into the gracious sound of a shawm and spanned as a lingering song for flutes and oboes across the gentle undulation of a clarinet melody carried by a pedal on D_b, which, melting away almost inaudibly, makes way for the thematic return in the strings. Having listened an instant, the piano re-enters in a glad exultation voiced in triplets of double thirds which rise up with increasing joy; a horn sounds the fanfare motif as from afar with an effect of a golden beam that breaks into cool forest twilight. And now begins a fanciful play on the piano, wondrously agitated and woven into duets in canon, shot through with shimmering orchestral sounds, sparkling with a thousand lights, breathing forth a young soul's sweet and ardent song ever more freely and loudly—and then only the horn strays

hither and thither, and the spell is broken. The inflexible powers of life and the world call once more. The working-out begins, and so compelling are this merciless conflict in sound and those lightning strokes of tragic forces that only afterwards does the hearer become aware with how great a mastery the drama has been worked into shape.

Here it is in truth but a step from Brahms to Wagner. There are episodes, loosely melodic and passionate, which might easily appear as "endless melodies" in *Tristan* or in the *Ring*, but that they are after all wholly Brahmsian. Unfortunately this gigantic movement is badly orchestrated: those who have imagined the sound, especially of the enormous opening, on reading the piano score, must inevitably be disappointed on hearing it from the orchestra. It falls far short of expectation, being brittle and poor in effect, as if a legendary hero appeared in everyday clothes. It has already become a tradition to reiterate the tale of the inadequate and dull orchestration of Brahms's works, though it is far from the truth. In this respect, as in others, Brahms is a master and a sublime executor of his own laws. Here, as elsewhere, he is true to his own nature, which is averse to any superficial, glaring or empty impression and scorns effects of mere colour. His tints are determined by the spiritual content of his music: he is the poet of the *chiaroscuro*, of dream landscapes, of romantic twilights. It is no accident that Anselm Feuerbach was the painter whom he especially cared for and to whose memory he dedicated one of his profoundest works, the *Nänie*, which is irradiated with a melancholy Greek beauty. Something of the noble and deep-toned colouring of Feuerbach's manner, which repudiates all that is crudely dazzling, is to be found in the orchestral sounds of Brahms. It is the instrumental garment that exactly fits his music: never sensuously ostentatious, never concerned with the burning splendour of bewitching blends of sound or with the magic potions of seductively distilled atmospheres; but he is extremely fastidious in dispensing his orchestral quantities and shows the most delicate fancy in shading his fabrics. Though he is certainly not ascetic, he as certainly is never superficial, and he will repel rather than flatter or solicit. He will not meet the hearer: the hearer must go to him. For those who will listen

lovingly to this wholly soulful world of sound, which is capable both of the weightiest concision and of the most spotless delicacy, his music will suddenly flame up like stained glass penetrated by a ray of sunlight. The master who in his piano works and his chamber music found new, almost orchestral, resonances, did not fumble with the orchestra itself and was certainly not one of those who merely "orchestrate piano scores." He always knew what he wanted and always wanted what he was capable of doing. The whole legend was probably started by people hard of hearing, and by short-sighted conductors who did not know how to read his scores correctly and in their lack of enthusiasm gave them a surly quality of sound. The first to bring about a change after Hans von Bülow, for whom the Brahmsian world had arisen as a glorious revelation, was Fritz Steinbach, though it must be said that he did it in no Brahmsian spirit. In order to enhance the orchestral brilliance, he made the violins over-accentuate and play melodic passages in a melting Italian manner, and asked the trumpeters to raise their bells high in the air. He thus obtained Berlioz-like effects at the expense of Brahms's true nature, but he at least demonstrated that this music, alleged to be so meagre and ashen, could after all be made radiant. And all those who have since heard the *German Requiem* under Furtwängler and the Symphonies under Nikisch or Weingartner, to the last of whom, by the way, we owe a very clever and pertinent study of Brahms as an artist in orchestration, know what to think of that master's "insufficient" instrumentation.

The D minor Concerto, however, is really inadequately scored. It was his first orchestral work, and he was entirely inexperienced in the arts and tricks of instrumental handling of which even the born magician of orchestral sound stands in need—and whether Brahms is one of those magicians, as Wagner, Berlioz and Richard Strauss undoubtedly are, may well be questioned. It is certain that, when he wrote this work, he depended more on Joachim's advice than he did later and followed it, in his faith in his friend's long practice, probably more thoroughly than was good for him. He ought to have trusted himself and his genius more implicitly. Some decisive moments of this deeply impressive work certainly fail to yield all their meaning: they sound lustreless, thin, lifeless and powerless—some of them positively inferior. Others again are

enchanting, fantastic, engagingly radiant, for genius is stronger than technical knowledge. What suffers most of all from a moroseness of sound is the introduction. On listening to the principal theme we ought to feel the blood congealing in our veins; but we feel only an unfortunate contrast between the idea and its embodiment. This theme should resound from trombones and tubas in dark, mail-clad majesty instead of merely rushing in the violins, which even the sharpest accentuation must leave too weak in their isolation, and the hellish trills should descend shrilly in all the woodwind instruments in consort with earthquake shivers in the percussion. Thus would the demoniacal nature of this terrifying introduction be matched; but the intention is not carried out, and this is an example of insufficient instrumentation.

It must be said that in this passage, as in many another in his later masterpieces, the insufficiency of the sound is due to certain whims to which Brahms clung with all his obstinacy: he declined to use valve horns, would write nothing but notes belonging to the natural scale for the brass, was reluctant to take the violins into their upper reaches and scarcely ever divided them; he did not like the combination of separate groups, and though this is the very cause of his peculiar veiled and duskily glistening sounds, he pays for them with the loss of a forceful, brightly shining orchestral quality, saturated with the lustre of auxiliary horn and trumpet parts. In the chamber works there is a freer resonance, prouder, richer and more flowing than in his orchestra.

How fully and strongly it blossoms there may at once be judged from the B major Trio, which overflows with youth and life and to which one succumbs after the first few bars, so warmly and comfortingly does it speak to the heart. How this music flames and blusters, how it sings without end, how it goes uphill and down dale as though it had wings! Indeed, it has wings. The first subject at once carries you to the heights, soaring on through twenty bars; the piano begins full-voiced with an urging, enthusiastic song filled with gladness, the cello joins in, and then all the parts combine in this song of youth and wandering—you may almost see them roaming up the golden-green Rhine valley. Next, a far-reaching second theme, persuasive and at the

same time introspective, into which the strings enter but shyly to enrich the tone-picture with doublings and counter-melodies. And now there is a ringing from an expanded breast, "free but glad;" G#. B#. G#. jubilate, rising higher and higher in a fervent ode to happiness. Then, after a moment's quiet contemplation, the players throw themes and particles of themes to each other like so many balls, fable and fancy awaken in the true romantic manner and it is as if old river-legends came to life. Now one of them begins to display his learning, a fugato is propounded and one seeks to outdo the other; but the sun shines far too brightly and there is nothing for it but to resume the fiery yet serious song of the opening, which drives forward more and more boldly and becomes a veritable hymn of praise. Suddenly all grows still, first and second subject, around which circlets of light seem to play, are arrested in pensive questions and answers, until there follows a glad awakening in an abrupt peroration. All this is so good, so young and so wholly free from weak sentimentality for all its abundance of feeling, so splendid in its flood of light and its prodigality, its unrestraint and its endearing doltishness, that you must feel yourself grow young and silly.*

Thus it is in the first version. Brahms, it has been pointed out, revised the composition in the years of his ripe mastery, which alone would prove how much he had it at heart. He removed all its dross and converted it into a wonderfully finished, tightly clamped, faultlessly pure and inspired piece of work. Was the gain worth all the blissful exuberance and blossoming profusion that was sacrificed? Yes, it was well worth it, not only because the first version has remained to us and we are thus the richer by a consummate masterpiece, but because this revision gives us an insight into the composer's workshop that would otherwise have been denied us; for he never divulged his creative secrets, and ruthlessly destroyed all that his feeling of responsibility would not pass as wholly worthy—finished works, no doubt many and excellent ones, as well as all his drafts and sketches. Here we see him for the one and only time actually at work. Nothing could be more instructive than these two

* The author uses an archaism, *tumb*, which is well reproduced by the word "silly" in its obsolete sense.—E.B.

versions: the first swelling with splendour, the second tense and magisterially clarified, still glowing with youth, yet cooler in various details. The first movement is condensed, the whole working-out modified, the fugato portion eliminated together with all that is abundant, freely improvisatory, legendary. The scherzo, it is true, has remained almost unaltered. It is a Böcklin picture in miniature, where Rhine maidens and other river creatures seem to be dabbling and frisking on a sandbank until the trio arrives with its grandiose melodic inspiration, a heathen chant at the sight of Cologne Cathedral, beginning in festive calm, continuing with waving banners and rising dramatically to mighty choral effects. The andante, always still and reserved, has assumed an even more brooding character. The vehement finale, with its obstinately hammering principal subject, has had to sacrifice its enthralling, songful second theme in order to make way for another, a bold, incisive, proudly masculine substitute. The loss is grievous, but the exchange is justified by the sharper outline thus gained by the whole movement. As the Trio now stands, it is a ripe masterpiece, laden with fruit and free from signs of old age, and it is certainly in this form that it will best represent its creator. The work of his youth points to a path into a new land: there are a hundred connexions with neo-romanticism; but the master turned aside, feeling the search after things as yet undiscovered to be arbitrary. Nobody has a right to suppose that mere destructiveness was at work here rather than inner necessity: it was fate which made of an explorer of new worlds the consummator of the old. But it may be taken for granted that little by little a conscious feeling of antagonism developed in him, a pride and defiance that refused to have any truck with those who had so vexingly tried to obstruct the young man's progress and to cast suspicion upon his honest intentions after their first flattering attempts to win him over to their side. He may have observed in more than one weaker mind the dangers these "new tendencies" brought with them: loss of a firm footing, surrender of all moderation, not to say of uprightness and dignity. So he saved himself with one bound into security, into the sheltered realm whose portals are opened only for those who, like himself, have with iron determination possessed themselves of all that is to be learnt from others, for whom the greatest

difficulties become the sport of a sovereign hand, for whom the craft no longer holds any secret. His first reason may only have been the desire to play with and to sway the whole material, his second to acquire the power of raising each structure autocratically according to his own laws; but the final reason was the wish to set bounds to himself and within these bounds to remain free and to preserve his own ego. And perhaps it was in truth his salvation.

A whole series of other works of this youthful period exists: piano music and songs, choruses and

But first of all, a word by the way.

I cannot and will not discuss all the master's works. This book is intended to show life and the relation of this or that work to life. The paraphrase of publishers' catalogues and the collection of criticisms of Brahms are not its purpose, and analysis is only to be resorted to in passing, if not altogether avoided. That this restriction is not to be ascribed to want of reverence will be judged, it is to be hoped, from any of these pages, and that it is not due to incapacity should be proved by earlier analytical writings of mine. In Brahms's astounding work there is no weak composition, though much that is splenetic and inaccessible, and nearly every one bears its own features. There have been few creative musicians who repeated themselves less than Brahms. For all that, I can only single out particular works—the most powerful and the most intimate—and content myself with pointing out what is most original, most beautifully abundant and most readily revealing, thus trying to awaken a perception of the nature of this music and its inherent truth, which truth is due to the fact that the music grows out of a soul's experience and is at the same time a voice from above. To the voices from below—those of the market-place, of enticing worldlinesses, of false success and deceptive immediacy of impression—Brahms remained deaf all his life. So much only shall be shown here: completeness is not my aim, only totality in the portraiture of a man's being.

. . . and above all the Serenades and the jewel in the whole set:—the B flat major Sextet, inspired in the master by the spirit

of his happiest hours, a spirit whose face may well have resembled that of a cherished girl, whom he asked not to address him with a horrid "Dear Mr. Brahms." He thought that "Dear Mr. Johannes" would sound much better. What may have remained unspoken in words in those days, speaks in the sunniest tones from this work, which is perhaps the inwardly calmest and brightest he ever wrote.

Will the biographer be accused of trespassing on the ground of fiction if he sees in this warmly illuminated composition, with its amorous first and last movements, its scherzo winged with a glad will to live, its andante with those self-contemplative variations on a mail-clad theme, the reflection of a romance that is unauthenticated? Or if he suspects in the very key of the Sextet, which coincides with the initial of a certain name, one of those secret allusions of which Brahms was so fond? Perhaps his deductions are not so unwarranted and unfounded as all that. The letter just quoted from, addressed to a pretty Viennese blonde in Hamburg, might not be sufficient ground for such suppositions, however significant one may think this almost defiant self-defence against a new tenderness: instead of the obstinate "I love music, only music," the recipient, great though her musical enthusiasm may have been, would surely have preferred to hear, "I love you, only you." But he remained silent once again and felt himself guilty in doing so. It is hardly a coincidence that Joachim, to whom he had evidently confessed, again and again wrote from England inquiring after dear Miss Bertha, and how much Johannes felt oppressed by this new load on his soul may be judged from the manner in which he announced to his confidant the gracious girl's betrothal:—"In short, B. P. is engaged to a wealthy young man. When I last saw her, I found her very pale and ailing, and my conscience was fairly relieved when shortly afterwards I received the card in question, with a few words." One would certainly take this for an avowal, and one that can impose but respectful silence. Bertha and her husband, Arthur Faber, remained the master's most devoted friends until his death and lightened his very last hours by their discreet and attentive affection. It was for the birth of their first child that Brahms wrote his *Wiegenlied*, now so extremely popular, into the accompaniment of which is woven one of the folksongs sung in

bygone days by the Hamburg Ladies' Choir—a covert, roguishly melancholy token of recollection such as Brahms loved to place on and between the lines of his staves as hidden references observed by few people, but no doubt in this case well understood by the young mother.

The two Serenades are faded and have an old-worldly effect to-day. They breathe the stale, sharp scent of dry flowers, discoloured ribbons and old letters long kept locked in forgotten drawers. But this was just what Brahms valued in them, and particularly in the second, in A major, which he positively hugged to his heart like a fond and proudly bashful mother. Its sound, as of dull silver, obtained by the sacrifice of violins and the melodic line in the dark tone-colour of the violas, the genre-painting of the themes in the manner of Spitzweg, where there is something old-maidish (in the best sense of the term), the almost anxious care shown in the cobweb workmanship—all this no longer touches us: it comes to us as from a vanished time, a submerged world, not unlike the endearing, ornate, peaceful old provincial novels of Wilhelm Raabe, which we gladly take up once in a while to read with delight and emotion and which awaken many remembrances. But we can no longer live with them. They are a world of porcelain.

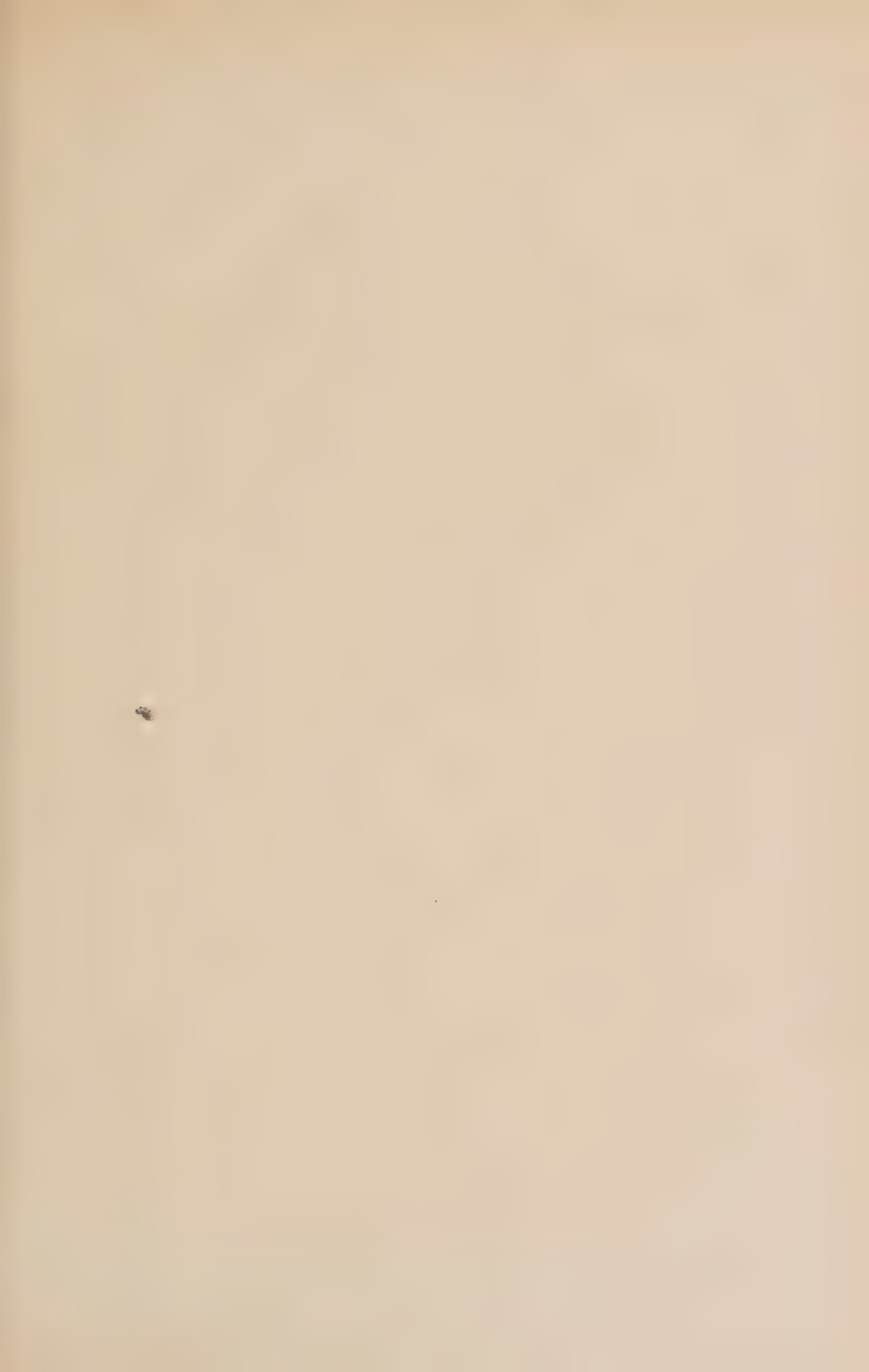
Again, in some of the choruses of that time we breathe sometimes with a little difficulty. They too contain much that is tarnished. The *Geistliches Lied* on Paul Fleming's glorious old poem, published as Op. 30, is very impressive, wholly free from bombastic piety and ecclesiastical pomp, thoroughly simple for all the art displayed in the ramified polyphony of the hymn-like, sustained and never florid voices, and vigorously expressive of strong faith and simple fervour. The *Marienlieder*, again, have a wonderfully artless tone of genuine and confident devotion. But that which invariably strikes us as a miracle from above, the true Brahmsian inspiration, they do not possess. This is absent even, I am heretical enough to declare, from the choruses for female voices, Op. 17, whose peculiar invention lies in the romantic charm of their tone-colour and not in specifically melodic ideas; the combination of soft, clear women's voices with two horns and a harp yields a bright golden, veiled fusion of light, but the possibilities of this sort of musical atmosphere

are by no means exhausted. Brahms comes perhaps nearest to a solution in the first chorus, the words of which (" *Es tönt ein voller Harfenklang* ") seem to have suggested the uncommon scoring. A magic horn, something of a minnesinger's exultation, may be perceived in the prelude and postlude rather than in the principal melody, which flows on warmly and beautifully enough, but with its rectilinear design and its white C major stands in strange contrast to verses that speak of life lost. In *Der Gärtner*, the third of these choruses, the shimmering horn tone and the glittering sound of the harp give the spirited love message of Eichendorff's poem its appropriate under-painting; but here again, the conclusion, with its foreknowledge of an early grave, does not harmonize with the placidly joyful motion of the song. It is the curse of the strophic song where the music remains the same for each verse. In the other two, more especially in the Shakespeare song, "*Come away, death*," but in the Ossian song also, the old English simplicity of the roundel-like melody alone would have prevented a more fully expanding euphony; the accompaniment, moreover, is archaically reserved, and the effect is not compelling. This is even more true of the thematic stiffness of the Motets, some of which fall into these early years. They go some way towards explaining the stupid judgment of Brahms as a merely "learned" composer. With the exception of two or three among the later examples, the impression here is of something written deliberately, not from creative necessity; these works are cases in which his joy in his own astonishing mastery threatened to become a danger. In the products of his gloomy hours, due less to the dictates of his inner self than to an energetic will to work, or in which he seems to withdraw into himself, musically as well as spiritually, his invention is often as if hunted to death or boiled out; everything appears forcibly pondered, obstinate and tortured, constrained and recalcitrant, and even here and there, though extremely rarely, desiccated, as if his music had suddenly gone grey. Most of the movements in the *Requiem*, many chamber works and songs, the *Song of Destiny* and the *Alto Rhapsody*, the first and the very last of the piano pieces are wonders of God; the Symphonies and Variations wonders of Brahms, the master; others however, like the Motets and many smaller choral pieces, but also the *Rinaldo*

Cantata and perhaps even the *Song of Triumph*, mightily though it is piled up from Handelian granite blocks, are manifestations of an enormous will-power, from which one stands respectfully apart: the spirit is silent and only the taut strength of the builder is at work.

Yet how compellingly does this spirit speak with sweetly serious and with puissant voices from the tone-poet's greatest creations as well as from his intimate monologues and miniatures, where he perhaps most irresistibly enchants "him who listens secretly." * This is true of the Ballades for piano, the *Edward*, for instance, which appears as if cemented of blood and iron and is far more oppressive and evocative than his later duet setting of the poem that falls short of the hair-raising, breath-taking mastery of Loewe's song; or the wide-spanned, star-illuminated and tenderly secretive second, which once more carries the message of fate (F#. A. F#.). Or again of the beautifully affectionate, almost shy cordiality of his homage to Schumann, the Variations (Op. 9), the songful inner parts and the passionate flitting and gleaming night voices of which would really seem to indicate one of the worshipped master's works, were it not that their syncopated displacements, their harmonic wealth and not least their melodic cryptograms are so entirely Brahmsian. These Variations are surpassed in their intimate absorption in another's dream-world only by those for piano duet (Op. 23) on that last theme which Schumann had accepted as a message from Schubert and tried to interpret when he was already confined at Endenich. On the other hand, the Variations on an original, very beautiful and solemn theme and those on a Hungarian song, to which the obstinate alteration of 3-4 and 4-4 time imparts something rather stubborn and monotonous, are not quite so abundantly diversified and expressive; they are doubtless echoes of the Reményi period which, it must be admitted, yielded far sweeter and more savoury fruit in the Hungarian Dances, the gipsy finale of the G minor piano Quartet, the *Zigeunerlieder* and the glorious fantasia of the clarinet Quintet with its Puszta sunset-glow. The Schumann Variations would be superior to the others by their moving perorations alone, where we are compelled to think of

* A quotation, "*für den, der heimlich lauscht*," from the poem by Schlegel chosen by Schumann as motto for his Fantasia, Op. 17.—E.B.





BRAHMS IN YOUTH

that master's album leaf, "The poet speaks." * Here the poet is silent to the end of time.

But what is to be said of the B flat major Sextet, a treasure among many, yet for most musicians the crown of Brahms's chamber music? And no wonder, for he seldom meets us with such human warmth, such cheerful friendliness, such unconstrained joy in life as in this vernal piece. Here all is rapturous and sunny, young and heartfelt, perfected with a precocious mastery, from the first subject which so snugly turns round its own axis in the graceful and cautious motion of a round, through the second that seems to ask continually, in the rhythm of a swaying German dance, "Dost thou love me, tell me quickly?" and the third with its happy, tender, jubilant impetus, down to a fourth—so carelessly prodigal is the composer—where the last four notes of the preceding are taken up and continued and to which one is tempted to sing softly:—"Farewell, my dear, I'll care for thee, far though I be from thee." How pleasingly and soulfully the fiddle begins an animated riot of triplets—the main theme disguised by figured diminution; how delightful is the modulation by means of an enharmonic change whereby the second subject leads surprisingly to A major instead of F major, only to land actually on the key of the dominant later. One motif is so ingeniously derived from another and is so rooted in what preceded it that the impression is one of absolute unity. Here Brahms holds us firmly and securely by his hand, which later on he is so often to stretch out towards us in a sudden impulse and to withdraw as suddenly, as if in a vexation of diffidence; here he is a brother and a friend accessible to our affection. The armour-plated andante theme, afterwards so concisely and significantly varied; the robust and bravely onward-pounding scherzo, which roars and blusters like a village fair of centaurs and even in the trio seems to overthrow all that is finicking; the final rondo, which Joachim reproached, not altogether without justice, with a lack of contrast due to the featurelessness of the second subject and with a running to seed of the close, but whose principal theme compensates for all this, for it appears to grow lovelier with each reappearance and one can never hear enough of it, so animated and full and manly is it,

* The last piece in Schumann's *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15.

and so inwardly gladly does it sing itself into one's heart: in every movement and in its entirety the Sextet is a gift of the brightest hour, blessed by all the beneficent spirits and carrying happiness into the world again and again. The six instruments sound like an orchestra, copious and colourful; there are at times striking effects, as if wind instruments were taking part, while here and there one almost fancies a human voice. Never before have such luxuries of sound been enticed from a handful of string players. No shadow overcasts this cloudless serenity; all is joy in life and counterpoint becomes a negligible factor, though it is present all the same. All that is left to be desired is a thematic acrostic such as that in the far more ornamentally wrought, silvery Sextet in G major, so that one may know and not merely guess for whom all these good and loving things are expressed in such tender friendliness.

From this point on, the road stretches forward, and it is not a straight one: it leads through undulating tracts and over mountain ranges—ever more deeply into solitary regions. But again and again, even in advanced years, when a ceaseless and often self-violating struggle for monumental greatness, which reaches its tragic and jagged heights in the first Symphony, had yielded an absolute clarity of design in the balance of idea and form, music boiled and fermented in the master. Again and again those yearning and surging, passionately animated and excited voices would break forth and hurl themselves away into space, unchecked and aimless—voices such as none before him had ever heard. He never contrived to silence them altogether, and this testifies more clearly than anything else to the fact that it was they which expressed his true being and that his taming, hammering, unifying mastery, which had not always the ease it shows in the Schubertian mildness and the Beethovenian strength of this Sextet, is the secondary part of his artistry, and certainly the acquired part. He will no longer surrender his soul to the world openly and defencelessly; but he must remain as truthful as ever, if he is to live on. Thus he makes it his duty to bridle and obstruct these voices without silencing them, to preserve all his inward songfulness and let it live in peace in his conquered realm without growing frigid. The new departure begins, frequently interrupted and wholly without plan or deliberation,

approximately with the two piano Quartets, the colossal Handel Variations and the repeatedly reshaped work in F minor, at first converted from a string Quartet into a Sonata for two pianos and at last definitely formed into the sinister, wrestling and sombre piano Quintet. The romance of labour goes hand in hand with that of life: Johannes Brahms stands at a parting of the ways.

IX

RESTLESS AT HOME

Two years of unsettlement passed. It is true that he spent most of that time, until the autumn of 1862, in Hamburg; but failing any events of especial interest he could not remain there without the risk of becoming embittered, though his disposition was anything but atrabiliar. It could not but annoy him to find how coldly he was treated by his native city, with how little sympathy his work was regarded and how each opportunity that might offer him a permanent public occupation was, it seemed, wilfully missed. That Johannes Brahms had meanwhile become a celebrity had been noticed without much excitement, and it could hardly be enough for him to recognize signs of his fame exclusively in his being importuned during his walks and gaped at on his appearances at concerts. In addition to all this, things became less and less pleasant in his old home. His father, a lively quinquagenarian, and his mother, now seventy-two years of age, no longer lived amicably together, and there were signs of greater troubles to come. Although they were not as yet manifest, and although Brahms, after long consideration, had moved to other lodgings—in the house of Frau Dr. Elisabeth Roesing at Hamm, to whom he afterwards dedicated his pithy and thoughtful piano Quartet in A major—an atmosphere of discomfort could not but be felt by one who was sincerely devoted to his family, an atmosphere that must have depressed him more than he was able to show. Neither were his brother and sister able to hold him: Elise was a faded, quarrelsome, irritable creature full of pretensions, who later embittered the life of her good-natured husband, a watchmaker; Fritz liked to pose and to ape the outward appearance of a musician such as Johannes was in reality, which earned him the nickname of “the false Brahms,” was a fop, ran into debt and behaved by no means

pleasantly at home. Brahms was on much better terms with his later stepbrother Fritz Schnack, whom he always gladly assisted. With the shrewish Elise and the patronizing "colleague" Fritz he did not interfere, though he might take a hand in their financial affairs. They thoroughly spoiled his stay in Hamburg.

He nevertheless remained for some time. A crisis had long been felt to be pending in the management of the Philharmonic concerts, and it threatened to become acute. Old Grund, who had long conducted the concerts, was stricken in years and his remaining vigour was no adequate substitute for the freshness which an organization of this kind needs if it is to do its duty of leadership in the world of music. Nor had he remained sufficiently alert mentally and artistically to continue his work as a representative of the period and its events, which were as interesting as they were contentious. For a long time voices were raised in the committee advocating a change and the engagement of a new conductor; but a reluctance to hurt the deserving old man deferred the decision from year to year. Now, however, the conductor's health began to weaken and the question became a burning one. That more than a year should go by before it was to be settled, none of those concerned could have foreseen. Brahms very much hoped to be chosen for the conductor's post, to which he had every right: no other musician in Hamburg, however talented, could boast of greater successes as composer and pianist. His name was highly honoured throughout Germany and men like Joachim and Avé Lallement, a musician of authority in Hamburg at that time, spoke on his behalf with the utmost zeal and made it clear to the society how greatly the concerts would gain in prestige and force of direction by the engagement of a Johannes Brahms as its new chief. He would himself have regarded it as more than a mere satisfaction. He longed for activity of this kind, first of all because it would have given him congenial work and the joy of useful and valuable exertion, but scarcely less for material reasons. He could certainly by this time manage to live modestly and quietly on his fees as composer, pianist and teacher; but he came more and more to dislike concert-giving, and lessons were in most cases a torture for him, for the very reason that he was a conscientious and productive instructor. He would long have given them up

if his publishers' fees had come in more plentifully in those days. Small wonder that the prospect of a conspicuous, well paid and artistically satisfying position appeared to him as a deliverance.

Thus he stayed on for a time and waited, produced agreeable music with his dear Hamburg Ladies' Choir and took pleasure in a visit from Clara, who had come with her daughter Julie. With consternation and with a feeling he would not admit to himself, he saw in the maiden in the flower of her youth an image of the beloved who now stood before him as an old woman. Only years later he realized the cause of the poignant felicity and disquietude of this reunion with Clara and with the comely girl whom he had once held on his knee. For the moment it passed him by like a shadow, for his heart was still in Göttingen.

He had much music to show his old friend. The unsought leisure afforded him by his native place favoured production, and rarely did he shake so much golden and juicy fruit from his tree in so short a time. The two piano Quartets, in A major and G minor, were maturing toward their completion—the C minor was laid aside, either from dissatisfaction or from a reluctance to give way to so gloomy a mood just then; the C minor Symphony and the *German Requiem* were ready in sketch, and next to the mighty and wrathful F minor Quintet, whose darkness is lightened only by the melancholy and yet inwardly steadfast andante, a cycle of remarkable songs grew towards the light of day, songs such as no composer ever produced before. They are neither *Lieder* nor ballads, but might best be described as lyric-symphonic frescoes—though they have rather the pastel-like, graduated fairy-tale colouring of Moritz von Schwind—or as legends for voice and piano. They are the romances from Tieck's *Magelone*. Stockhausen had been in Hamburg, and his singing evidently had much the same effect on Brahms as Joachim's playing in stimulating him to creative effort. This great singer was the first who attempted what to-day is regarded as the only artistic possibility: he sang Schubert's *Schöne Müllerin* and Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, not in single numbers torn from the context, but in their entirety, as the cycles for which their creator had intended them. Brahms found in this kind of performance, where one song enhanced another and made the spiritual connexion with what comes before and after clear to the

hearer, an unequalled incitement. He was most eager to compose such a cycle of songs which should be poetically connected and, though not necessarily narrative in character, grouped round a central figure to whom and to whose experiences all should refer. He had already marked down for composition separate poems from the *Story of the Fair Magelone and Count Peter of Provence* in his pocket song book; now he took up the whole and made of it that singular, emotionally brittle, almost excessively fragrant *romancero*, which, with its mediæval troubadour type of melody, its heavy flow, and the suppressed character of most of its numbers is not easy to grasp nor immediately pleasing. The hearer must go through thorny hedges, must be made aware of the unusually large proportions of these songs, before he can enjoy the glowing welter of roses and the heat of a Provençal sun which flame in the wide emotional range of this lyric minstrelsy. He enters a magic circle that excludes all shallow sentimentality, from which he will find it hard to obtain release into the workaday world again. The darkling fires, the acrid sweetness, the chivalric buoyancy and the maidenly delicacy of these romances of far-off days and a far-off country, which yet belong to the present and to all time, unfold themselves but slowly; but in the end they captivate so irresistibly that there is no longer any escape from this magic garden of peace. They are unique even in Brahms's own life-work and, not understood for a long time, they are to this day insufficiently known and loved.

The *Magelone* Romances were written by fits and starts: the first four in June, 1861, the fifth and sixth in May the following year, the other nine not until four years later. More rapidly drafted and finished, far more quickly than it would seem possible for so astounding a phenomenon in the realm of piano music, were the twenty-four Variations on a theme by Handel (Op. 24), which in their purely pianistic problems, in the powerful and healthy concision of variants resembling a series of portraits by old masters, in their sonority and their manifold architecture surpass even the boldest of Beethoven's works in this form. For all their contrasting diversity, they make a single high-vaulted structure, crowned by a gigantic fugue flung out with a terrifying cyclopic force, one voice set over another and bursting out at the last into such desperate, reckless jubilation that one fancies oneself before

a rushing mountain stream. It is clearly shown here that it is possible to carry the hearer away irresistibly and victoriously by means of a fugue, the most mathematically exact of all strict musical forms constructed by the reasoning faculty. Mendelssohn alone attained to something of the kind in his E minor Fugue, but only because he suddenly abandoned the rules and began to rhapsodize; Brahms not only contrives to respect the rules, but to exceed their exigencies in the art of thematic development, augmentation, diminution, inversion and endless embellishments of the fugal texture, and while adhering to them to transform them into the fancies and proud dreams of a cathedral builder. In this Bach is his only model and Max Reger his only disciple.

About this time Brahms had the satisfaction of finding two publishers who were disinterested and far-seeing enough to accept and issue all the works produced during the phase he had just gone through so painfully and during that immediately to come, including the largest and least accessible compositions, which doubtless gave no promise of quick returns. Amends were thus made for the mortifying lack of confidence displayed by Breitkopf & Härtel, who refused his ill-treated piano Concerto after the Leipzig disgrace, by the well-known firm of J. M. Rieter-Biedermann in Winterthur, who now acquired it; the *Ave Maria* (Op. 12), the *Funeral Hymn* (Op. 13) and the eight Songs, Op. 14, came out at the same time and were followed by important works like the *Magelone* Romances, the F minor Quintet and the *German Requiem*. And it was with pleasure that he found in Fritz Simrock, son and heir to the founder of the great publishing house of N. Simrock in Bonn—afterwards transferred to Berlin—a musical, humorously pugnacious and hard-drinking admirer of his work and his person, who kept faith alike with Brahms the man and Brahms the artist, shrinking from no sacrifice calculated to attach the honoured master permanently to himself. He actually succeeded in becoming his principal, and a few years later his sole, publisher. Brahms had no cause to complain of his publishers, nor they of him. The correspondence between him and them—that with Simrock alone takes up four volumes—is altogether delightful: hardly ever can an author have addressed such letters to his commercial represent-

atives and hardly ever can the relationship have been inverted as it is here. Brahms continually twits his business friend with having no notion whatever of his trade and, of course, still less of good music, else he would not waste his hard-earned money on such doubtful products as his own; but he often seriously resists the offer of too highly-rated fees, unwilling to be answerable for the risks run by the firm with difficult and therefore not readily saleable works. Sometimes he positively warns his publisher not to take this or that work—a Symphony, for instance—because he cannot see why his friend should pay for the pleasure he himself experienced in the conception and composition. Again and again he proves to Simrock his total lack of judgment, his incapacity and his negligence, and once proposes that they should change places. Simrock, he says, would surely write notes passably well and hardly compose more deplorably than would be advantageous to the level maintained by the firm, and if he, Johannes Brahms, were at the head of the business, there would scarcely be as much money spent to no purpose, while certainly affairs would be kept in better order. Needless to say, certain serious wishes are generally hidden under this kind of banter and frequently indirect complaints of untrustworthiness in the engraving and correcting of proofs, on the careful supervision of which Brahms very rightly laid the utmost stress, or of small negligences in the despatch of materials for performance or of complimentary copies. But the tone in these letters is charming and, in those to other publishers and those dating from his younger years also, there is a dignity, an earnestness and a self-appraisal as sure as it is modest that makes the man and the artist alike loveable and worthy of deference. In this connexion one cannot refrain from remarking how incomprehensible it is that many people, among whom even some of the master's biographers are to be found, regard him as a dry and sterile letter-writer, disappointingly impersonal and uncommunicative. The contrary is true: in his letters Brahms reveals himself. Reluctantly as almost all of them were written—or perhaps for that very reason—they have a terse suggestiveness, an impatient precision of expression, and they show a gift of saying a great deal in a few aphoristic words that might well be envied by the shrewdest writer. There is hardly a postcard, much less a letter-page of his that does not

contain a personal turn of phrase, a truly Brahmsian sting or a facetious singularity. It is as if he spoke in person. The legend of the clumsy letter-writer clearly originated in his own everlasting groans over his disinclination and incapacity to write. He is among the most revealing and, incidentally, the most entertaining of correspondents, fond of playing with things half expressed or wholly concealed, of using words that seem to have a false bottom, of letting the reader guess rather than understand—and he is exceedingly annoyed if he is not understood at once. In his correspondence with Clara Schumann, with Joachim and with Herzogenberg, we positively live his life with him, not merely the story of these friendships, nearly all of which, significantly for him, were at some time or other to be overclouded and on which a shadow remained even after the resumption of the old relations. But even such apparently dry material as the correspondence with publishers is illuminated by the force of his personality: his growling, stinging humour as well as the nobility and honesty of his magnanimous mind make documents of the highest value. His letters tell the story of Brahms's works and their vicissitudes, of the master's intimate experiences, and they are moreover honourable testimonies to their recipients. It would be impossible to deny the two publishers, who were occasionally joined by Dr. Abraham of the house of C. F. Peters in Leipzig, the most generous disposition and above all a faith in the vocation of the master which for a long time they shared with few people; they are the more to be praised for an attachment that withstood all opposition, for their liberality in the payment of fees such as no non-dramatic composer had ever before received, and their uncomplaining readiness to sacrifice anything on behalf of the artist and his work. Little did they guess that they would be rewarded beyond their expectations. They certainly had nothing to regret.

In 1861 friend Jussuf had exercised all his power of persuasion on Brahms to induce him to accompany him to Vienna. There were a thousand reasons, he said, why he should visit the city of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, but for one single reason Brahms was obliged to resist the allurements: the precarious state of his purse forbade the extravagance of such a journey, so

long as no certain prospect of earnings could justify it. Yet it was as if something drove him from home, in spite of the joy he must have felt from a productiveness that flooded every hour of his existence like a cataract, and in spite of the cosiness of the new lodgings which held him in Hamm until the autumn. He became restless, and the visits of Clara, Joachim and Albert Dietrich enticed him to move on rather than to remain behind alone. He followed Dietrich's call to Oldenburg where, under the leadership of his friend, who was engaged as conductor there, he played Beethoven's G major Concerto with his own cadenza, which so absolutely matches the style of that work, and his iron-clad Handel Variations, received with frantic rejoicing by the whole Court Orchestra. Next he went to Cologne to be present at the Rhenish Musical Festival, where he took pleasure in the company of so many "nice colleagues" and made an acquaintance which stirred up his longing for Vienna anew: Louise Dustmann, the great Viennese dramatic singer and passionate interpreter of tragic women's characters. He was ever defenceless against sonorous and soulful voices and did not fail to succumb to the magic of this powerful and impetuous one; the luxuriantly handsome woman clearly made an impression on him and conjured up before him glowing images of the musical and social life in Vienna, which contributed to the maturing of a half-formed decision and also perhaps helped him to overcome a slight feeling of discomfort at the thought of a certain fair Viennese girl, who at that very moment had returned to her native city. However, being as easily disenchanted as kindled, he did not at once go to Vienna; he followed Dietrich, and the more gladly chose Münster am Stein, in the Bavarian Palatinate, for a visit because Clara Schumann happened to be there. In the shadow of the Ebern Castle, where Sickingen died and Hutten wrote his challenging epistles, all manner of things were dreamed and discussed. But he was deeply affected to find that the spectre of mental derangement again hovered near Clara. Her stepbrother, Woldemar Bargiel, whose gifts exemplified Hebbel's dictum that "great talents come from God, small ones from the devil" with a sinister truth because they contained a dram of demonic genius, had for some weeks shown signs of insanity, and in the words written by Brahms to Joachim his agitation and

dread seem to be trembling still:—"So I am for the second time confronted by madness, and I cannot tell you how terribly I am shaken. Would that I had not to experience this again." He was driven onward, unable to remain idle. In July he sat once more at his desk at Hamm and recast the F minor Quintet. For two months this held him; then his patience suddenly gave out. He felt unworthy to lie in wait for the Hamburg appointment. Favours he did not need, and if it was a question of merit, they might call him. A yearning for Vienna, almost unbearably enticing, seized him and this time reason was in accord with it, for the two piano Quartets made it possible for him to take part in chamber concerts and it was to be expected that the Handel Variations would repeat their successes in the city of the most pampered musical public. There were a few savings, too, so that the venture did not appear too foolhardy, and if the worst were to come to the worst, he could always lie low in Hanover or Oldenburg. The one thing certain was that he could not endure Hamburg under the prevailing conditions. They might be changed, however, on his return from the city on the Danube in a few months' time.

On September 2, 1862, Johannes Brahms left for Vienna.

X

A NEW HOME

It is not likely that many Viennese music-lovers knew anything of Johannes Brahms when he arrived in the Austrian capital. With the exception of a few who are not content to live in caves, but concern themselves with the living progress of art, hardly anyone can have known as much as the name of the Hamburg master, to say nothing of his works. In any case, the noise of the battle that raged round Wagner and his cause was so loud at that time and the quarrel so bitter—it went to the length of insults, violence and family feuds—that nothing else was noticed. Two months later his name was on the lips of every connoisseur and within a year he could say, with Michelangelo:—"And that I am here is known to all."

This speaks as much for him as for Vienna: for the penetrating force of his thick-blooded, slowly conquering, but at the last engrossing personality as well as for the receptivity and feeling for what is genuine of the musicianly people of Vienna, who pierced through all the delicate veils of Brahms's work, through all its inaccessibilities and austerities, to its true nature. He did not make it easier for them than for others, but he found here, alongside the desultoriness and frivolous faithlessness characteristic of the Viennese, that sixth sense which, unintellectual and sensuous, is yet spiritually animated and receptive to the true inwardness of music and its most elusive imponderabilities. This is not to say that he won his victory at once and without a struggle, for he had to take the contested ground inch by inch. The Wagner party at once scented the danger of a new pretender to the throne, stood distrustfully aside and waited only for an opportunity to sound the alarm. It did not fail to come, and it was natural enough that he should also find opponents outside the cliques which flourished particularly exuberantly in Vienna, opponents both narrow-minded and intelligent, some defending a standpoint on

principle, others merely destructive, also on principle. He would have been no genius, but only an agreeable mediocrity, if he had immediately taken the superfluous majority by storm. That the partisans of Wagner and Liszt took up a hostile attitude as a matter of course was, it must be admitted, not incomprehensible after the publication of the unfortunate manifesto. They gave him a good deal to think about and in the course of events were surpassed in their orthodox one-sidedness, their fanaticism and their blind intolerance only by one single community:—the very exclusive one of the Brahms worshippers themselves, who were invested with the ironic title of honour of "The Brahmins."

At first, however, there was not a trace of enmity. The blond evangelist of the new music was heartily received; everyone was eager to see the musician proclaimed by Schumann face to face; acquaintances were made and renewed; in the old music shops of Haslinger and Spina, whose owners succeeded in acquiring small works by the interesting newcomer for their catalogues, many musicians endeavoured to lay hold of him:—it was almost a repetition of the early Leipzig days, only friendlier, more winning and unconditional, for there was none of that cool reserve which is foreign to the Germanic southerner. Brahms was infinitely well pleased. He felt that he could live and be comfortable here, were it not for the stronger attraction of home and family, and he was almost biblically old-fashioned in such matters. The amiable people, the Prater, in whose solitary leas and woods he could walk and meditate so happily at sunrise, and where in the evening he took part with boyish delight in the popular amusements, riding on roundabouts in the merriest company and savouring the sensations of all the booths in the highest of spirits; but above all the music, the euphony of the opera orchestra, the excellence of the choral concerts, the whole atmosphere, which seemed to mingle clear church bells with Schubertian melodies, Straussian waltzes and carefree Viennese folksongs, and again the places where living traces of the great masters may still be found—all this captivated him from the first. Only one was missing among the many whose hands stretched out so impulsively to welcome him:—the friend to whom he could have emptied his overflowing heart, with whom

he would have liked to take counsel and make plans; but Joachim was once again in England. With Joachim, whose repeated encouragements were primarily responsible for this journey to Vienna, who knew the city and its people and who could have guided him without prejudice, it would have been a pleasure to go walking and exploring. Even in Hamburg he had been nettled by the distance between Jussuf and himself, which could in no wise be bridged by letter ("You know, once and for all, I cannot reconcile myself to your English tours,") and from Vienna he hurled this thunderbolt:—"He who wants to make money in any way whatever is surely possessed of the devil body and soul. This is for me unquestionable and I can say nothing else. That it should be possible to take pains to overcome an aversion to certain things I am unable to understand; I could not accomplish it, however I tried." He is so speechless that he writes no news of any kind and merely gives vent to his profound disappointment with his native city:—"I am sitting here with a little homesickness for Hamburg after all. If the people in question would only create a little more musical activity there, so that one could avoid laziness and sometimes hear music that matters and do something that is worth while, I should not go away to give my ears a treat elsewhere."

Meanwhile he gave the ears of the Viennese a treat in return. Having several times failed to meet, Brahms and Julius Epstein at last came into touch with each other and their meeting was the occasion for the master's first public appearance in Vienna. During more than forty years I knew this man as "old Epstein," although until long past his ninetieth year he remained the most youthful of musical enthusiasts, and I am inclined to believe that when he came into the world people said to each other:—"To-day old Epstein was born." He was, next to Carl Reinecke, the Mozart player *par excellence*, the kindest teacher of the piano, and had a fine ear for genius, which he recognized in Gustav Mahler after a few bars of his playing as readily as he did in Brahms, whose chaste power, both as composer and as interpreter, moved him profoundly. This thoroughly good man, who lived for others and for his beloved art, was the most disinterested critic whom Brahms could possibly have discovered. When he spoke with persuasive deliberation and in a loud, grave voice to his

interlocutor, caressing his clean-shaven chin or adjusting his spectacles, sweeping away every objection with his resounding adagio laugh—there was a pause between each “Ha!”—and reinforcing his well-pondered words by the appealing expression of his pleasant face, framed by long hair inconspicuously combed back and a grey Emperor Joseph’s beard, he could get whatever he wanted—and he never ceased to want things, though always for the benefit of others. When we heard that Brahms had brought two piano Quartets with him from Hamburg with which he was not displeased, and when the composer at once countered his suggestion to try the works over in one of the larger halls with “No, much rather in your own little cosy place,” Epstein immediately went to Joseph Hellmesberger, the leading quartet player in Vienna, and his colleagues, inviting them with a few other musicians to a rehearsal that was to be enlivened by breakfast. That it took place in the house where Mozart composed his *Figaro* may well have been a blessed omen.

Hellmesberger was at once fired with the utmost enthusiasm; he startled and delighted Brahms by falling on his neck and declared that he must play the G minor Quartet at his very first chamber concert, before many days should have passed. The composer, pleasantly surprised by the incredible certainty and colourful perfection of this interpretation at first sight, gladly gave his consent. He did not yet know the sympathetic and responsive Viennese character that was well exemplified in the deftly improvisatory, infinitely sweet and singing performance of this violinist, who was himself typical of Vienna in his nimbleness, his lightning wit and his scintillating, slightly superficial joy in his craft. But even Hellmesberger’s cynicism and slanderous scornfulness seem to have melted before the altar flame of Brahms’s music. This arch-musician—for he was that in spite of his malice and his propensity to intrigue—who was scarcely ever moved to reverence or given to gushing over the merits of others, was so far carried away as to exclaim:—“This is Beethoven’s heir!” But Beethoven himself had to discover that the boundless admiration which had greeted him when he came as a guest yielded to a subacid appreciation and sometimes even to undisguised aversion on the part of his fellow-artists once he had become a resident. His heir’s experience was little better.



BRAHMS'S LODGING IN VIENNA



The G minor Quartet was received with an enthusiastic favour that was accorded to Brahms as composer and pianist alike and encouraged him to risk a concert of his own. This took place on November 19 and the programme is characteristic of one who did not aim at cheap success and was intent on submitting his work to judgment in all seriousness, without any cautious flattery of the public:—either you take me as I happen to be and have me entirely, or my place is not in your midst. The Hellmesberger team played the A major Quartet with him, a few songs and ballads were sung between the instrumental works, and he played Bach's F major Toccata, Schumann's passionately animated, star-coursing Fantasia in C major, which inexplicably had never yet been heard in public in Vienna, and his own Handel Variations. And Vienna did want him entirely.

His success was surprisingly great and he was enraptured, as a letter to his parents shows. Curiously enough, it was just the living and glowing piano Quartet, which so mightily plucks the strings, that was least readily understood, less so than the far severer Handel Variations, a mine where one has to stay a long time before the eye grows accustomed to the dim light of the depths and can follow the vein of gold in the solid rock. It is amusing to read Hanslick's criticism of the work, however gladly one may admit the difficulty of "hearing at sight"—to use Brahms's expression—and however considerable the coefficient of error must necessarily be at a first encounter with a new and great personality. This critical failure before so inspired and brilliant a composition is at all events noteworthy. Hanslick, who by the way falls into the pardonable error of seeing the influence of Schumann in Brahms, speaks of an "exoteric" attitude of his works and asks the apprehensive questions:—"Will spontaneity and melodic power keep pace in Brahms with the high finish of his harmonic and contrapuntal art? Is that nebulous veil of brooding reflection that so often clouds his later works a harbinger of penetrating sunlight or of a still denser and drearier twilight?" He welcomes Brahms as one of the most interesting and significant figures of his time, but sees his greatest strength not in melodic and thematic invention, but in the richness of his figuration and in his command of form. And he thinks the themes of the A major Quartet "not very important."

They seem to him arid and cold, which is in truth not the fault of the themes, but of the ears that hear them. He misses a great, streaming line of development:—"We contemplate a continual joining and disconnecting, a preparing without an end in view, a promise without fulfilment. In each movement we find admirable episodes, none of which, however, is capable of supporting a whole piece." He is honest enough to point out that he judges merely from a first impression, but opines that a more careful study would scarcely show a more convincing effect, which "requires melodic plasticity, great climax and development that moves onward to a goal." It is a positive feat not to discover these things here, and he closes with the more than singular remark that this work and some others among Brahms's latest, remind one of Schumann's last period:—"Only to the real Schumann's golden, mature middle period has his favourite pupil (!) so far failed to give us a counterpart." Each word misses fire, and it all sounds to-day as if some entirely different work were under discussion. The reader is asked to bear this passage in mind, for here already the legend of a confused, reflective Brahms begins to form itself, which is afterwards to be accompanied by that of the surly, tragically gloomy composer, said to be unable to take a gladsome flight, as if he had never written, besides many joyous songs and hearty scherzos, the *Liebeslieder* and the Waltzes for piano duet, the Hungarian Dances and the *Gipsy Songs*. It is a fact that Brahms for a time inspired a downright dread as the tone-poet of pain and melancholy. The dramatist Mosenthal, who wrote the effective opera librettos for Goldmark's *Queen of Sheba* and Ignaz Brüll's *Golden Cross*, once reproached Brahms with the too exclusively disconsolate nature of his music, and when Brahms gently defended himself by remarking that he was surely quite gay in many of his works, the poet answered him with angry sarcasm:—"Yes, but when you are really merry from the bottom of your heart, you sing, 'The grave is my delight!'" With all the deference that was his due, Brahms was for many years seen in this light in Vienna.

The sojourn pleased him: he found all manner of incentives. He was sought by such men as Peter Cornelius, the fine elegiac

artist and the roguish and original humorist of *The Barber of Bagdad*, the lyrist of the mimosa-like, sensitive and tenderly impassioned *Bridal Songs* and a blue-eyed, shyly affectionate soul into the bargain; or Carl Tausig, the cold but irresistible pianist who incited him to the composition of the Paganini Variations, that compendium of pianistic technique in the highest sense of the term—a man of intellect and nerves, the complete opposite of Julius Epstein, who was a man of heart rather than of mind. And Wagner was in Vienna. Of the three concerts at which fragments from his works were played Brahms did not miss one, for all that he seemed to listen with but a frigid interest; the musician Wendelin Weissheimer, one of the most comical and shortsighted members of the Wagner community, at least reports with some indignation that Brahms, who sat next to him, said when he saw him applauding vigorously: “But Mr. Weissheimer, you are tearing you beautiful white kid gloves!” Which was as much due to his easily awakened contrariness as many a pronouncement of a very different kind. He half confesses to Joachim in a letter dating from the close of this memorable year:—“Wagner is here, and I shall have to be called a Wagnerian, chiefly of course for the disagreement that must be provoked in any reasonable human being by the shallow manner in which musicians here attack him.” His attitude towards the Bayreuth master was in course of time subjected to changes, quite apart from estrangements due to personal and humanly quite comprehensible causes; but even where he felt compelled to refuse his allegiance on principle, he did so with mixed feelings of startled admiration and respectful disinclination, thus expressing the conviction of one who recognized and pursued aims which differed vastly from that of his satellites, whose watchword was negation at any price. One genius knows how to acknowledge another while he reserves himself the right of defence and even of hatred. But Johannes Brahms was never a hater.

In the new year, on January 6, he gave his second concert. The success was such as to do him honour, though it was not as decisive as that of the first. In spite of the full life he led in Vienna, where the sensuous, zestful atmosphere visibly did his reserved disposition good, his restlessness was aroused again:—“It is quite pleasant here, but I shall probably return to

Hamburg all the same.” He still expected a call from his native city. There were rumours in Vienna of his being offered a post as choral conductor, but he feigned deafness and would not tie himself until matters had come to a decision at home. Perhaps he thought with greater longing than ever before of a regular and lasting employment that would yield him artistic satisfaction and make it possible for him to found a home of his own with a woman he had not been able to forget. In Vienna there lurked a danger for the easily inflamed genius who afterwards suffered in silence from such impressions. An enchantress beckoned in the shape of Louise Dustmann, the Donna Anna of the Opera, whose voice, initiate to pain and gladness, he could not easily withstand. Both his desire and his danger became clear to him as in a lightning-flash when, in February, Joachim announced his engagement to the Hanoverian contralto Amalie Schneeweiss, who on the stage was known as Amalie Weiss, and whom Joachim himself called “Ursi,” after her second Christian name; she had a most glorious and deeply sonorous voice and was his worthy artistic counterpart by reason of her profound sense of style and the unostentatious finish of her singing. To realize how agitated Brahms must have been, one need only read his letter of congratulation where, after his own manner, he conceals more than he tells:—“Nobody will feel your happiness more than I, and particularly at this moment, for your letter froze me into a mood of utter dejection. For I cannot cease to think here whether I, who take good care to keep other dreams at arm’s length, had better enjoy and experience all things but one in this place, or whether I ought to go home and there have one thing—my home—and let everything else go. I will look forward with pleasure to the time when, as in the case of many another faithless friend, I may bend over a cradle in your house and forget to indulge in reflections.” But he nevertheless extended his Viennese visit again and again, in spite of the suppressed sigh in the same letter:—“I have thus one more reason for going to my northern home.” He wanted to be fetched.

Suddenly he received strange news:—the Philharmonic had chosen a new conductor; Brahms had been passed over. The successful rival was no other than the master’s friend and fellow-artist, Julius Stockhausen, the great singer, who as an orchestral

commander was as much a novice as Brahms himself, though their fundamental qualities can no more be compared than those of a stuffed owl with those of a living eagle. Brahms was most deeply perplexed and wounded. He had certainly been aware that Stockhausen had already conducted these concerts, once as it were *all' improvista* and the second time in response to an official engagement, but the news he had received as well as his own feeling had led him to believe that his friend had assumed the baton with the best intention and in order to keep intruders at a distance, thus holding his place open for him until the given moment should arrive at which the situation should be so cleared as to allow of the solemn enthronement of the only pretender whose claim could be taken seriously. Whether Stockhausen was at all aware, or whether he came to know later on, what he had done to his great friend, is uncertain; that Brahms once again clenched his teeth and remained silent need not be said; a word to Joachim alone betrays his disappointment and his regret at having been "ass enough" to turn his back on the arena and to go on a jaunt while the door was being closed behind his back. He never got over it. In the letter in which, many years later, he renders thanks for his nomination to the freedom of the City of Hamburg, his bitterness over the neglect and depreciation of his birthplace is still apparent as a vibrant undertone.

Those who know him cannot think it surprising that he should at this very moment have torn himself away from Vienna and gone back home. Let his fellow-citizens see his defiantly-indifferent face, and let them be made aware of the fact that a Hamburger was received in the musical metropolis with all the honours that were denied to him at home. On his return journey he visited Joachim in Hanover, was enchanted by his friend's betrothed and still more by her majestic and earnest singing, and asked the master fiddler to try out his F minor Quintet—then cast for strings alone—not without some misgiving about the insufficiency of its sound. Afterwards he spent his thirtieth birthday among his family and was distressed to find that the disagreement between his parents had gone so far that the old people actually thought of separating. He had to use the utmost persuasion to stop the breach at least temporarily. Just then came a message from Vienna which, though not

altogether unexpected, was particularly gratifying at this juncture:—an official proposal that he should accept the conductorship of the Singakademie, which he did with alacrity. Shortly before he had written to Joachim from Vienna:—"It seems that they are keeping the conductorship of the Singakademie open for me here. I am not asking for it and am rather afraid that a definite offer may before long compel me to think seriously about the matter. Here I can live pleasantly and agreeably without any appointment; in Hamburg I could not endure the boredom of lounging about without one." But now he welcomed the invitation if only because it enabled him to show the Hamburgers that he did not depend upon them and their doubtful estimation of him. Disdain and wounded pride no doubt played a part in his ready acceptance. It is true that he was still apprehensive of so conspicuous and responsible a new office. He wrote to Dietrich:—"When all is said, I greatly dread to try my talent for this kind of thing in Vienna, of all places." But in his heart of hearts he knew himself to be armed and prepared and could admit to himself that for a variety of reasons, and probably not least that of shining before his fellow-citizens, he looked forward to the future with pleasure.

He did not return to Vienna until the autumn, and he took office on September 28. Even now he did not anticipate that he would henceforth see Hamburg only as a guest, that the word "homecoming" would be thought of by him only in connexion with Vienna, and that he would be held back there, and gladly allow himself to be held, to the end of his life. Still less did he suspect how inevitably all this had to come about and to give rise to new aspects in his work. He had found his second home, and perhaps only now his true habitation.

XI

CHORAL CONDUCTING

To picture Brahms as choral and orchestral conductor from the judgment of his contemporaries is an embarrassing task. All shades of opinion are represented, from blunt or timid deprecation to an astonishing degree of appreciation. Friends and admirers like Clara Schumann or Elisabeth von Herzogenberg made abundant use of the fair privilege of overestimation; Hanslick kept a prudent silence, for all his belated prepossession * in favour of the master whom he had so hesitantly welcomed, but with whom he had in the meantime exchanged the fraternal *Du*. One thing is certain:—Brahms was as little a born conductor as Joachim who, unlike his admired friend, was positively rabid to handle the baton; Brahms nearly always did so with some reluctance and only in the case of his own works, particularly when they were to be heard for the first time, desired to “gesticulate” in person and thus to fix a certain tradition of style. Concerning Joachim as conductor we have the testimony of an authority who is both trustworthy and modern in his outlook. Siegfried Ochs, a disciple of Bülow and a master of vivid choral performance, tells us about him in his delightfully fresh book of reminiscences, *Geschehenes, Gesehenes*, which sparkles with wit and is seasoned with the most delightful malice. His judgment is hard. “He showed at rehearsals a certain resemblance to Robert Schumann, who always heard what he saw in the score and noticed mistakes only when they went far beyond the ordinary. In his enthusiasm he would sturdily beat time, but his manner was inaccurate and unreliable, while he lacked any capacity for working out a composition in its finer details. Everything was ground out in precisely the same way, without

* The author manufactures the word *Nacheingenommenheit* as an antithesis to *Voreingenommenheit*: if English had the India-rubber quality of German, I should coin “post-judice” as an exact equivalent. E.B.

the least yielding on the part of the man on the rostrum." How convinced Joachim was of his own worth is proved by the reply he gave to this adept of the conductor's art when the latter had the temerity to ask that he might be allowed to stand at the desk himself in order to acquire the necessary technical skill, instead of merely looking on. Here are his remarkable words:—"I really do not know what you imagine you may learn by wielding the baton yourself. You might at most disgrace yourself before the orchestra, which would be disagreeable to you. Besides, your best opportunity of learning how to conduct is surely to see me do it. Just watch carefully what I do, and you will do well enough later on." That he really did do well enough later on can hardly have been due to the great artist who was so mistaken about himself. At the same time it seems strange that Brahms should so frequently have entrusted his orchestral works to his friend's interpretation, if so competent a witness is right in his severe judgment.

That Brahms himself was devoid of the manual skill of conducting, that his wrist lacked the required elasticity, is scarcely to be questioned. No less certainly was he without the faculty of immediate adaptability, of foresight and presence of mind, of the adroitness that will avert disaster, as well as without a gift of making eloquent signs. Already at his second concert the performance was so perfunctory that he was obliged to interrupt it. Against such defects, which are overcome with ease by far lesser talents, the greatest musicianship may avail nothing: something of the actor's art is needed in addition to bodily agility and force of mimic expression, to achieve the required transmission of the conductor's will. Those who have known Brahms at the piano and take Beckerath's extraordinarily evocative drawings of him in the act of conducting as a complement to their impression will not be likely to go far wrong in picturing him to themselves; they will even understand why he was reproached with a "dreamer's pensiveness" that suits the composer well enough, but may prove fatal to the choral and orchestral commander. They will not even wonder that his unhistrionic competence was mistaken for pedantry, his inward-burning fire for coolness and his bearing, never calculated to please, much less given to posing, for indifference. He no doubt conducted as much "into him-

self" as he played and must have forgotten, in his entire abandonment to music, that he did not produce it for himself, unobserved. This is bound to nullify the efforts of a conductor, who must exercise his will-power not only on singers and players, but on his audience as well. To make matters worse, he was short-sighted and thus could not reckon with the subjugating power of the eye which is the most irresistible means of transmitting energy, though in personal intercourse the glorious blue fire of his glance was magically compelling.

Moreover, there were other difficulties. The members, at first greatly attracted by the eminent name and the mighty personality of their new chief, began to desert their ranks in alarming numbers during the rehearsals. He gave them too much hard work and offered them too little entertainment with his everlasting Bach Cantatas and all the other forbidding works by old composers. He also had to contend against a rival for whom he was in no way a match:—the much more lavishly financed "Singverein" of the "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde," which consisted of far more and better voices. Its conductor, Johann Herbeck was the perfect antithesis of the artless Brahms, who never strove after external effect and always served an impersonal cause. They were as different as a St. Elmo's fire is from a steady, straight flame. Herbeck was operative in every sense of the term, a born commander of great masses, a decorative strategist, an overweening general, a strong driving force in musical life and its undercurrents. This handsome man, with his black waving hair, his imposing head, his streaming whiskers and darkly glowing prophet's eyes, his refulgent mien and pathetic gesture, had the gift of fascinating performers and audiences, though he was imposing rather than great. For all the immense energy of his praiseworthy endeavour, the impression he made was unequal, often surprising, often disquieting, always somehow theatrical and at the same time somehow impotent. He was for Brahms a dangerous competitor and an opponent not to be underrated; for one of the most unostentatious of men and musicians, who chose to persuade only by worth, not by theatrical displays, it was not easy to contend against qualities of this sort. Brahms was defeated.

The programmes of the concerts conducted by Brahms with

the "Wiener Singakademie," which in spite of its excellent performances was labelled as a choir of the second rank and was condemned to bear this label down to the present day, may have been too plain and indigestible a fare for the public of those days, who had only just become acquainted with the Matthew and John Passions and for whom Bach, the master whom Brahms cultivated with an ardent predilection, was a figure to be revered with faint-hearted circumspection. They would accept a chorus or two, provided it was not too long, because a semblance of appreciative enthusiasm looked very well; but a favourite Viennese saying is "only let us exaggerate nothing"—and Brahms possibly did exaggerate and expect too much of people in systematically giving them performances of numbers of cantatas and motets, of the Christmas Oratorio and of many weighty and reverential, religiously ascetic works by other old masters. They certainly rejoiced whenever he allowed them to hear the German folksongs he had so lovingly arranged. Already after the second concert, at which the breakdown just referred to occurred and the slightly tipsy accompanist suddenly left the whole choir in the lurch, they were somewhat scared. The programme of that very day shows how little Brahms knew the Viennese, whom he offered at the beginning of the carnival little but heartrending funereal songs and serious biblical choruses, thus making the performance a kind of monkish flagellation instead of the bright entertainment that was looked for. People simply ran away and the singers performed their task morosely and anxiously. And when the third performance under Brahms, a none too finished one of the Christmas Oratorio, was easily and brilliantly beaten by the John Passion under Herbeck, it availed little that Brahms the composer stepped into the breach and attempted to make good with his own works what he had failed to do as conductor, for all his noble aspirations and fine intentions. It is true that the applause after the *Marienlieder* and the other four-part vocal works was vociferous and that the middle movements of the B flat Sextet, led by Hellmesberger, were very warmly received, but the springlike magic of the first and last sections was not appreciated, and the dark, majestic F minor quintet, played with Carl Tausig in its earlier form of a sonata for two pianos, gave the hearers some

nuts to crack which for the moment they found bitter and only years later learned to relish. His disinterested aim, too, was misunderstood by most people: he was regarded as presumptuous for appearing in person to oblige the committee of the society and to recover its prestige, and the fact that every single work heard that night was by the "chorus master, Mr. Johannes Brahms," was considered an abuse of his position, which he was suspected of exploiting with some object of his own. But he took a reasonable view: "Rather than prostitute myself as a mere conductor and bore the public with a long succession of choral performances, I will stand the fire as a composer. Those who come will then know what sort of a joke they are in for." Incidentally, this letter quoted from, which is addressed to Joachim, shows how his habitual pitiless self-criticism deserted him in this case. Hanslick appears to have been so disheartened by his favourite's performance that he mentioned the bare name of Brahms as conductor in his notice, but said not a word about his capabilities; yet Brahms writes: "The Christmas Oratorio went quite well and gave me great pleasure. That the second concert rather fell off was hardly my fault and even to-day I am moved to admire—as the only competent judge, I daresay—the skill in programme-making I developed at that time!" However that may be, the desire to give whole "Brahms evenings," which were asked of him more and more frequently and urgently and discountenanced by him more and more emphatically, was thoroughly crushed out of him on that occasion.

His joy in his choral activities was also spoilt. Before the last concert he sighed: "However, such a society, and such a committee too, have their snags, and you have to learn how to deal with them," and in a casually added note he betrays his true wishes by saying how much he would have preferred to deputize for his friend Dietrich, who was on leave, as musical director at Oldenburg. Some influential position in a central German town would have pleased him best. After that Brahms concert, however, he seems to have seen his position quite clearly. Although in May, 1863, he was re-engaged for three years according to statute, he definitely resigned his post in the following July and would yield to no persuasion to resume it.

Otto Dessoff, the conductor of the Viennese Philharmonic concerts, became his successor.

Brahms was aware that as a conductor, though in this as in everything else he always gave of his best, he did not reach his own true level, and he could not be content with less. That he had no need to let himself be defeated by Herbeck on any field whatever, much less to give way to him, was in itself a decisive reason to withdraw. Yet, for all his insight, he allowed himself to be enticed once more eight years later. During the winters of 1872-5 he conducted the very concerts of the "Gesellschaft" which Herbeck had previously directed and which had thrust his own into the shade. Perhaps this had something to do with his acceptance of a proposal that did him honour: he may have wished to show that he was able to give this enterprise another countenance than his predecessor had done, less seductive and captivating, maybe, but certainly no worse nor less beautiful—and show it he did. But although he learnt much and was able, with the magnificent resources of the "Singverein," to give far more perfect performances of much larger works, to say nothing of the pleasure he found in being of service to living fellow-composers by giving first performances of their new works in the capital of musical Europe, he could not find any lasting satisfaction in an occupation for which, like a Bertran de Born of music, he needed and was able to turn to account but one-half of his mind and his gifts. After three winters he laid down this office again, and this time for good. He never accepted another fixed appointment, but appeared only as the authoritative interpreter of his own works, and even there for preference at first performances only. The fact that increasing publishers' fees ensured him an independent existence consolidated his decision. He remained in Vienna, a stranger and yet at home, as he was anywhere. He loved the city and its inhabitants, who in their turn grew to care for him ever more deferentially, occasional *sottises de Vienne* notwithstanding. His work also took root more and more firmly in this good soil. He became a perfect master there—master of his life and of his art. He put faith in himself, and now he could invert his friend's motto of F.A.E. and write above his threshold: Lone-some but free! (*Einsam, aber frei!*!).

XII

THE MODE OF LIFE OUTLINED

It is difficult to escape the impression that whatever may happen to a man like Johannes Brahms, his everyday existence has nothing to do with his real life, which proceeds apart from the things of actuality and obeys laws other than those of outward existence. What others see is only a semblance; the essentials lie somewhere deep down and lead their own separate life: they may be overshadowed, but never determined, by the dark clouds of "actual" happenings, for they have their own growth and their own crises. No workaday incident can reach them; they are secreted as in a well-shaft whence they can commune with the stars even at the bright hour of midday. Events like those of his conducting period left no marks on Brahms and his work, save for a few technical and practical lessons which affected his craftsmanship. It was an entirely, different order of experiences that remained permanently reflected in his soul and his music—to use two words for the same thing: a glance, a word at the right moment, the friendly act of a supposed enemy, the tone of a voice, the acclamation of a stranger, the pressure of a woman's hand. Concerts, publishers, festival committees, successes and failures counted for little more than the facts in the lives of a few people whose existence and attachment alone mattered to him. He went through the gestures of daily life, but he was himself elsewhere. He stood in the midst of the world, yet was utterly lost to it.

The truly important things alone and their relation to his work need henceforth be discussed. To go with him to all the dinners he attended at the houses of hospitable friends and on every journey he took to hear or perform a new work of his would be tiresome and profitless. Where fate is seen at work, where the unexpected happens, where events throw light into this or that cranny of an ever more closely walled-in and guarded

soul, there is need of narrative. The exposition of his inner life alone shall now be my concern, and the relation of outward happenings only where they bear on it. There shall be no enumeration of concert dates, no paraphrases of tourists' tickets.

For the life of Johannes Brahms assumed a certain monotony once he had settled down in Vienna for good, in spite of his increasing fame and glory. Rarely is a tragic lightning-stroke seen to flash into his apparently contented and sheltered existence, which concealed so much sorrowful renunciation and so much restless, unsatisfied longing for simple human happiness. There were times at which he would have given all the honour in the world, even the unspeakable felicity of the creative hour, for a little love, for the nearness of a tender woman and the sweet lisping of a child. He always found his way back to himself; yet a day came, long before he had reached his fortieth year, on which he became an elderly bachelor with all his peculiarities and privations. He had to deny himself so much in his life that his heart became sore, and so he took refuge most easily with innocent creatures: at play with children and with animals he felt most at ease, could forget and breathe freely. Only for a few short days did he feel a new hope, soon to be extinguished.

He withdrew into himself, in Vienna and elsewhere, for after his secession from the "Singakademie" he was now here, now there: in Hamburg, in Switzerland, often during the summer at Lichtenthal near Baden-Baden, a neighbourhood he liked, not only because Clara Schumann had a little house there, but because it made him productive. The *Requiem* grew towards completion there, the wonderhorn Trio, Op. 40—I can find no other name for this woodland song as only he could sing it*—was conceived and the *Song of Destiny* sketched. In Vienna too his fount flowed. One weighty work after another was poured forth, and even waltzes—the delightful set for four hands, dedicated to Hanslick, and the enchanting, pensively lovely *Liebeslieder* for vocal quartet and piano duet—were lured from him by the pleasant landscape

* A quotation:—"Waldweise, wie er (ich) sie kann."—Wagner, *Siegfried*, Act II.—E.B.

of the green and golden vineyards on the banks of the Danube. They are Brahmsian waltzes, suffused at times with gentle melancholy and a veiled serenity. He comes very near to Schubert here and yet is wholly himself in the silvery cobweb delicacy of his rhythm and harmony.

He led no public life. In Vienna he might be seen in the Prater each morning, bareheaded, hastening onward with short steps, his hands folded behind his back and humming or singing to himself; at noon he might be espied once more, passing the Polytechnic and going through the little park where his monument now stands, making his way to his accustomed inn, "The Red Hedgehog," impatient and lost in dreams, a hunter ever on the look-out for the quarry of thought and rarely returning to his desk without some capture. "Society" he avoided; only with a circle of musicians and of music-loving men he liked to associate unconstrainedly and to argue over many questions concerning his art, though never himself or his own works. But he preferred to sit and drink with them or to roam through the Vienna Forest in their company. Hanslick, the despot of criticism; Joseph Gänsbacher, the singer and 'cellist (incidentally also the teacher and lover of the phenomenal singer Marie Wilt, who was also phenomenally ugly and so bulky that people used to jest about the "Voyage round the Wilt* in eighty days"); Carl Goldmark, who was later to become the profuse exotic of *The Queen of Sheba* and already in his violin suite and in the *Sakuntala* Overture had begun to blend his showy and sensuous colours; Theodor Billroth, the master surgeon and tyrannical music enthusiast; Epstein, the good-hearted, best of teachers and best of men, who was always busy with secret charities; his colleague, the keyboard-hammerer and braggart Anton Door, a professor of the piano who indulged in extremes of love and hate and in prodigious exaggerations, but was at bottom as harmless as a child; C. F. Pohl, the quiet and profoundly musical biographer of Haydn and registrar of the "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde"; the learned and somewhat whimsical Beethoven scholar Gustav Nottebohm, to whom we owe the disclosure of the hieroglyphic sketch books of Beethoven:—there were the first of the Viennese

* A pun: Wilt is used for *Welt*.—E.B.

friends. In the course of time they were joined by others: Ignaz Brüll, who was as great a child as he was a musician and pianist—which is saying a good deal; Max Kalbeck, the poet, critic and most faithful prophet of Brahms; Eusebius Mandyczewsky, that walking compendium of musical history and theory; Richard Heuberger, the gifted and original composer and writer; the married couples of Faber, Miller, Fellingner and Conrat. But his most intimate musical concerns and the adventures of the finished works Brahms still preferred to discuss and consider almost exclusively with the high conclave of his distant friends, more particularly Clara Schumann, Joachim and Stockhausen, but also with Grimm—his dear “Ise,” with Franz Wüllner and with Hermann Levi, the first conductor of *Parsifal*, whom he had met at Baden-Baden and with whose genuine and high-minded nature he had at once been struck: “This man, in spite of all his theatrical routine, is so fresh and looks so clear-sightedly up to the sublimest heights as to make one’s heart rejoice.” However, the fact that Levi, in addition to his cult of Brahms, could also worship an idol like Wagner and even had the temerity to perform a symphony by Bruckner, was enough to put the master out of humour and to settle like a blight on their pleasant relations. There was also the figure of a fair-haired woman full of charm, intelligence and goodness. She had first come to Brahms as a pupil. Her name was Elisabeth von Stockhausen, and she was the daughter of the Hanoverian envoy. Having taken piano lessons from Epstein, she was sent to Brahms by that teacher. But the new master seemed remarkably sparing of words, embarrassed and reserved, and after a few lessons he asked that he might be relieved of teaching her. He would not rob anyone of a pupil, he said, despite the protests of Epstein, who knew well enough what he was doing. He told an untruth, or rather, he refrained from telling the truth. Once again he found himself defenceless against exceptional musical gifts and against the quiet charm of a girl whose adorably clear, soulful and animated presence must have had the effect of a portrait by Leonardo da Vinci come to life. What she may at that time have felt for the man and the musician whom she sincerely and comprehendingly admired all her life has remained a secret; it is certain that long



ELISABETH VON HERZOGENBERG



after she had become Elisabeth von Herzogenberg he retained the tenderest feeling for her in a heart that never betrayed itself, and that she became his most candid, upright and devoted friend who had a more penetrating understanding of his nature than any other. Her correspondence with Brahms is among the most precious documents: nowhere is the master more lovable in his elaborate equivocations and little asperities, with which as letter-writer he so often recalls Gottfried Keller; and it is delightful to see her criticizing him with a girlish mixture of forwardness and shyness: you positively see her blushing and you conceive the greatest admiration for her extraordinary gift of divination, for her incredible memory that is capable of reproducing whole scores by the revered master after a single hearing, for her unfailing ear and her capacity to differentiate sharply, which saves her from any indiscriminate idolatry while making her ear receptive to every subtlety of harmony or thematic reference. To watch her scold him is a joy. True, she hardly ever carps at any work of his, though he accepts blame from her with the heartiest pleasure, acts upon many of her suggestions and looks forward expectantly to the expression of her unwarped and pure womanly feeling. But she can become adorably angry when she finds him unable to utter a single straightforward and appreciative word concerning the works of her beloved Heinrich or when he goes so far as to wound that devoted admirer by some careless or ironical turn of phrase. But Brahms never could praise where he did not feel it to be deserved; he was much too truthful about his art, and it is touching to see how he writhes and twists, how he talks of irrelevances and evades essentials, in order not to tell lies and yet not to give offence. Heinrich von Herzogenberg was one of those "goodly masters" who do not realize that even during their lifetime they have "long turned to dust." * He had command of all the rules and elegant contrivance; the

* *Mastersingers*, Act I.:

WALTHER: Sir Walther of the Vogelweid'
The master was who taught me.

SACHS: A goodly master!

BECKMESSER: To dust long turned:
Our rules from him, then, could hardly be learned!

(Ernest Newman's translation)—E.B.

effortless mastery of the most difficult contrapuntal problems were child's play for him, and his intentions were of the purest; only one thing was lacking—the divine grace of heaven-sent invention, melodic inspiration. Brahms suffered from these works, the more so because they claimed him as model, and what gave him still more intolerable pain was his enforced insincerity. He found Herzogenberg's Requiem "hopeless" and wrote almost despairingly to Clara Schumann, who was also on terms of friendship with the amiable and estimable couple: "My pleasure in these people is considerably impaired, nay, it may be rendered impossible, by his compositions. I should perhaps know how to deal with them, if I had him to myself now and again. But then his wife is always there, and one really does not know where to take the necessary phrases from!" And another time he sighs: "How gladly should I tell him, if I could, what he would be so glad to hear!" He could not bring himself to do it. Their attitude in this delicate situation honours these three people, who in spite of all remained lovingly and faithfully attached to one another until death.

But I discover that I have allowed this array of pleasant figures, who now almost all * have their home in the realm of shades, to draw me on into years to which I shall have to return later: into those superabundant harvest years that lie between the master's two great adventures in choral writing, years which, like the decade that followed them, passed under the sign of the mightiest works we owe to this visibly blessed existence—the former under the sign of the *German Requiem* and the *Song of Destiny*, the alto Rhapsody and the *Song of Triumph*, the latter under that of the first two Symphonies. Between these came such "small matters" as the three string Quartets, the violin Concerto, the two string Sextets, the Paganini Variations and a mass of songs and choruses, to say nothing of the *Rinaldo* Cantata. For this last many admirers, and Brahms himself as well, had an evident personal regard due to certain elements of secret confession which it contains and which for them impart to it an alluring beauty. To many hearers of to-day it appears curiously artificial, as if illumined by Bengal lights, as well as oddly constrained in its

* Actually all since the death of Eusebius-Mandyczewsky—E.B.

melody and resembling many of the serious composers of baroque opera in its manner. Brahms once said to me, quite seriously and with a modesty of self-appraisal that will scarcely be ratified by history, that posterity would probably one day rank him with Cherubini. He was certainly mistaken. Cherubini is an important, earnest and severe composer, who will always be regarded with respect, but never again welcomed with delight and affection: his music is dead. That of Johannes Brahms will live, for it is not only the product of energy and of a striving after style, but the product of creative power. Only *Rinaldo*, that decorative Preller * panel in sound, reposes coffined in the Cherubini sepulchre.

It is significant that the impetuous storms that raged through the youthful works give way more and more to a measured, firm and secure tread. This is seen even in the outward tempo of the music: in the place of the *allegro con fuoco* of the principal movements, the *presto agitato* of many scherzos and finales, comes the *allegro mesto*; agitated motion is modified here and there by a *ma non troppo* or a *non assai*; the *grazioso* in the scherzos and the *moderato* in the interludes become noticeably more frequent. It is all in accord with the life of the master who no longer dashes onward, but saunters through existence. Beginning with the large choral works his music becomes, unlike that of Bruckner and the ecstasies and landscape painters of the art, wholly the product of the human mind, not that of nature: it is built rather than evolved, temple and homestead rather than blossoming tree and snow-capped summit. In the early works it was different. They had not the rustic air and the peasant schoolmasterliness of Bruckner, and even where they blew the shawms of Arcadian shepherds, it was rather like a flight into God's free world out of confining walls. This music is dedicated to the great city, though only in the sense that it deals with the atmosphere of old palaces, of towering cathedrals, of fountains in quiet open spaces. In the songs alone we still hear the rustling of cornfields and the voices of the forest on moonlit nights, though many seem to have the everyday sounds of cool

* Friedrich Preller, the painter, to whose frescoes at Weimar and Leipzig the author compares *Rinaldo*.—E.B.

burghers' houses, reverberating through courtyards and up winding staircases. But these are dwellings that have no telephone and no lift; for Brahms was interested in and attracted by technical inventions, not as aids to a luxury to which he was completely indifferent, but as manifestations of the intrepidity of the human mind.

All this change was expressed in his outward appearance, which in the course of time grew from that of a slender, pale and shyly moving St. John's figure into the more massive and imposing one of the master of some German guild. And this especially when he grew his long and unusually fine beard, of which he was not a little proud and which at first served to amuse him hugely as a new disguise. He even thought that he might now safely visit Bayreuth—which, by the way, he never did in his life—because he would be able to walk about there unrecognized and to escape all troublesome interrogations. But what pleased him most was that his head was now fully representative of the Germanic type, and he was inordinately proud when an ethnographic work gave his portrait as that of an ideal example of the Caucasian race. He became more careless in carriage and dress—never slovenly, but easeful. Collars and starched shirt-fronts he loathed; the knotting of a necktie was a catastrophe: what he liked best was a woollen shirt with collar and ready-made tie attached. He was always dressed in black, save for the coffee-coloured overcoat that acquired fame among his friends through being worn for decades. A coat of lustre he felt to be most comfortable and this was matched by trousers that were always too short, for he would simply truncate them with a pair of scissors whenever a tailor dared to defer so far to tradition as to make them long enough to reach his boots. His satisfaction with his own appearance was expressed by a pedantically neat and respectably simple fatherliness that was far removed from fashion. He was now a magnificent sight with his lion's head, his splendid, pure and high-arched forehead, the free, quietly beaming glance of his deep-blue eyes, the healthy red of his cheeks and the stocky but pliable and vigorous figure. Thus the master of the C minor symphony had to look. The youthful Johannes, whose portrait lives in the F minor sonata, is the German lad

filled with romantic dreams and torn between the ecstasies of Novalis, the eccentricities of Jean Paul and the despairs of Hölderlin. He is perhaps more endearing, but the mature man is more imposing. Where works and their creators are of true stock, both show the same face.

After the "Singakademie" adventure Brahms sullenly avoided Vienna for several months. He went northwards at first. A few days at Göttingen were full of melancholy recollections, but they did not play so much upon his iron nerves as the time in Hamburg that followed. He was obliged to visit his father and mother separately, for the old people had really parted. Nor did he succeed in his endeavour to act as mediator; they were obdurate and, more deeply moved than before, he took his leave of his father with a gently reproachful, yet understanding handshake, of his infirm and suffering old mother with one of those silently agitated embraces which one knows are never to be repeated. The aged and frail woman had been dealt the last blow by the man who had left her: now she was pining away altogether. Six months later, in February, 1865, she was dead, and Johannes arrived only in time to attend her burial. She blessed the son who had given her only pride and joy, and never an instant of sorrow, out of her very grave: her death called from out the shades the music that was destined to crown him with the greatest fame and to make him immortal—the *German Requiem*. Begun by him with his thoughts on Robert Schumann, and continued with many sad forebodings, it was borne on dark wings towards its solemn and gentle conclusion after his mother's demise.

Never before have the departed been sung to rest with a lullaby of such solemnity and consoling melody. The biblical words and the Lutheran strength and greatness of the music may be grasped by the simplest minds, who will understand the apprehension of things to come as well as the touching, beneficent appeasement of these plaintive, exhorting, supplicating and promising sounds, which would perhaps have penetrated to the heart even more readily—like the dirges of a populace—if Brahms had decided to renounce all the arts of the church style and to do without those vast fugal movements, which are in themselves so masterly and built so mightily into grandiose

cloistral edifices; if, that is, he had sung, as he very nearly did from first to last, according to the plain strength of the biblical text, just as he felt in his constricted and afterwards liberated heart. That the Requiem, whose separate movements shall be dealt with in connexion with other works, was completed after 1866 and in time for 1870, when it became the most moving and edifying funeral music and heroes' song for those who had fallen in the war, doubtless contributed not a little to the far-reaching impression it made; but it was nevertheless more compelling and lasting than that of the other and more glittering composition in which Brahms sounded a rugged, monumental *Song of Triumph* that would have been worthy of Handel. This proves beyond all recorded fact that it was not the great occasion, but great music and its overwhelming glory which gave eternal life to a wholly undogmatic work that was purely human in its German language and German spirit. The name of Johannes Brahms, which until then had but intermittently gleamed in diamond letters, was set among the stars with the *German Requiem*.

In the meantime, however, it seemed to become extinguished in a startling manner: the first three movements, none too lovingly performed by Herbeck after a few hasty rehearsals, were mobbed and hissed by the Viennese public in 1867. There is no doubt that it was the fault of the all too massively piled-up fugue, which was not only distorted into a deafening agglomeration of sound by singers who were intent on shouting each other down wildly, but threshed out mercilessly by the crashing blows of an ambitious drummer in that mighty but unduly thickened pedal-point on D which spans itself across more than seventy bars and is reinforced by hammered quaver beats of a kettledrum. The audience, who had accepted the first two numbers with respectful interest, was greatly disconcerted by the confused bluster, the ceaseless and enervating thunder of the drum and the monotony of the obstinately retained key of D major, which in the end obsessed the brain by its fundamental note alone. Their regard for a composer whom they had long recognized and honoured should have been enough to prevent a demonstration, and would probably have done so, had not a factious opposition multiplied every sign of displeasure like an amplifier and drowned every voice of approval. "A

Requiem for the good manners of the Viennese concert rooms," Hanslick called it, though he himself found the pompous double fugue questionable, and during the noisy monotony of these masses of sound had the sensation of a traveller passing through an endless tunnel. Brahms was not disheartened by the failure, for he was sure of his work and knew that it could wait; but his symptoms seemed far more depressing than those he had diagnosed in Leipzig after the D minor concerto. He did not show what he felt, however, and not long afterwards was able to think with triumphant satisfaction of the Viennese public who had failed him, but made up for their precipitate discourtesy by an enthusiastic ovation when the work was given in its entirety a few years later. Its first vindication came on Good Friday, 1868 : an unearthly and soul-stirring performance in the cathedral of Bremen, which was the beginning of a victorious progress that has not reached its end to the present day.

During these events in Vienna Brahms may have been mindful of two great men whom he was privileged to meet face to face soon after his entry into the Austrian capital. One of them was his countryman, Friedrich Hebbel, the thoughtful poet whose every word was charged with import and parable and who, inflexible and hard of spirit, died of caries two months after Brahms had taken on his first choral conductor's post. He wrote him a distich, the significant words of which seemed to foretell later events and which Brahms may often have repeated to himself as a prophetic solace :

" Pearls thou hast scattered abroad ; a hail-storm falls of a sudden

And thou see'st them no more. Hope for the sunrise,—it comes!"

The other was Richard Wagner, who soon after the young master's arrival had expressed the wish to make his acquaintance and whom Brahms actually visited. It was not long after a concert at which Wagner had heard Brahms's F minor Sonata, the andante of which left its traces in the *Meistersinger*, then in the making. Curiously enough, not one of the many letters addressed by Brahms to his friends contains a word about a meeting which he can surely not have regarded as unimportant ; yet the reports of eye-witnesses agree that the older master distinguished the younger by the most cordial treatment, that he insisted on hearing his Handel Variations and " overwhelmed

him with praise." Neither can there be any doubt as to the authenticity of what he is said to have told him afterwards: "This shows what may still be done with the old forms, provided that someone appears who knows how to treat them." Nothing is more regrettable than that something or other that remains unknown must have occurred to separate two men who could have meant so much to each other and who would have enhanced and supplemented each other's art. Whether an actual incident contributed to this strange circumstance is not known, but it is to be supposed; otherwise it would hardly be explicable that the gentle Peter Cornelius, who looked out placidly and kindly from behind his spectacles like one of Eichendorff's artless, smooth-haired dreamers, should have, in a sudden exasperation, written thus in his diary:—"With one person I have quite decidedly finished, and that is Mr. Johannes Brahms. He is a thoroughly selfish and conceited man. I did not seek him out this year: he came to me. Let him walk the path of his fame. I shall henceforth neither disturb nor accompany him." Whatever the case may be, something must have happened; some order to disparage the music of Brahms and even his person must have been issued,—was issued. To be sure of it one need only note the peevish, spiteful tone of bitter disdain in those passages of Wagner's writings where he speaks of Brahms in a manner one would gladly be able to forget for the sake of the great and beloved master of Bayreuth, whose image it mars so painfully. The reason seems unfathomable, but is hardly so: it may well be sought in the fact that Hanslick expressed his antagonism ever more openly and that Wagner, who suffered visibly under this prosecution by the most influential critic of his time, took the originator of the unhappy manifesto of long ago to be also the secret author of the attack of a publicist who was well known to be the friend and the notorious propagandist of the "wooden Johannes." The suspicion, false as it is, could seem plausible enough to anyone who did not know Brahms and the proud integrity of his character; but he never, either for his own good or to the disadvantage of others, exercised any influence upon a journalist and never occasioned as much as a word of criticism by personal effort. If he committed any fault, it was that he kept silent and never averted the unmeasured blows which his

champions aimed at Wagner, Bruckner, Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss,—and this fault, if fault it were, he had to expiate bitterly. It is not surprising, when all is said, that even some who were favourably inclined towards him were capable, in their complete ignorance of his disposition, of suspecting that he was the tactician in the rear of these battlefields of the intellect. Perhaps he ought to have defended himself. His manly silence brought him and many who cared for him much sorrow.

Less notorious than the ill-treatment of the Requiem movements, but even less comprehensible, was the public rejection, some six months earlier, of one of his most delicious works, the string Sextet in G major, which was performed at one of Hellmesberger's concerts and listened to with utter indifference. The charming filigree of the thematic material, the enchanting delicacy of the finely pencilled lines, passed over the deaf ears of an audience who seemed receptive only to more drastic colours and not to the exquisitely shaded, shimmering tints of this filtered music, where all that is material evaporates and none but the most precious elements contribute to the result. Brahms wrote this clear and engaging, faintly melancholy work at Lichtenthal near Baden-Baden, after his departure from the Vienna "Singakademie." It is a lover's last greeting for Agathe von Siebold, whose Christian name is cited in the second subject, though not quite orthographically, for the notes are A.G.A.D.H.* E. and the last but two is not in the theme itself, but hidden in the second violin part. Joachim knew about it and once alluded to it, while a Viennese friend of the master's was indiscreet enough to relate that Brahms once said to him:—"In this work I took leave of my last love." So long did he carry in his mind the image of the professor's lovely daughter, in spite of the little passions for this or that seductive woman that would flicker up awhile.

Very soon after his mother's death, Johannes received surprising news from his father. The old man had gone a-wooing and become engaged to a buxom widow. It had happened in an amusing and truly Brahmsian way. The efficient woman, eighteen years his junior and still more than tolerably good-looking, at whose table he was wont to eat his midday meal, had

* German for B.

long pleased him and he had indulged in many speculations whether to propose to her or not. But he lacked the courage to approach his spirited and energetic hostess, until one day he decided to hand her a slip of paper whereon he had written her name next to those of several women of their acquaintance, saying to her: "You are a sensible woman, Madam Schnack, who may well give an old muddlehead a piece of good advice. I have a mind to get married again. Now tell me to whom. Have the goodness to choose for me." And she laughed, well knowing how it was meant, and chose herself. The letter written by Johannes to his father, with its expression of pleasure not free from anxiety and its mixture of satisfaction and doubt, is a noble testimony to the respectful and yet independent attitude of a son, who for all his freedom and his mental superiority, and in spite of his "heart-beating," always retained a tone of childlike devotion and gratitude. He promised to make the most grateful of sons for the new stepmother, if she were to make his father happy,—and he kept his word most admirably. He was cordially attached to the woman who made the evening of the old man's life comfortable, and surpassed himself in gifts of friendship. He took care of her after his father's death as well as before, expressly declared his allegiance to her and her son, let them both share his experiences and in the end secured their well-being by handsome legacies. The man who was so often decried as cold-hearted and inaccessible once again showed his almost shamefaced goodness there: he was as anxious to hide his most generous sentiments from the world as others are to conceal their vices.

It is touching to recall the efforts he made to give pleasure to the two old people by trying to persuade them to undertake journeys and tours with him and to see something of the world's beauty, of which neither had the least notion, having scarcely left their four walls, let alone the environs of Hamburg. The stepmother wisely remained at home, but his father he twice induced to accompany him. He dragged him to the tops of mountains, showed him fine cities like Salzburg and Vienna, and had no idea, in his somewhat despotic eagerness to give pleasure, that the old man was heartily glad, in spite of his admiration of nature and of many a masterpiece of architecture, to sit over his

glass of beer in the evening, and that he secretly longed for the unexacting peace of his home. The relation between the two was delightful. So long as it was a question of music, the elder Brahms would willingly defer to his son's superiority. It must have been an amusing incident which occurred some years earlier, when during the Hamburg rehearsals of the Detmold Serenade, the old man could not forbear to take part with his double bass. Brahms was obliged to interrupt the music on account of a bad mistake, but the incivility that was about to escape him died on his lips when he saw that his father was the culprit and was looking at the rigorous conductor with such comical dread that the reprimand, which in pure justice could not be suppressed, became something very like an apology. In other matters the great composer remained a little boy in his father's eyes, and it is diverting to imagine the creator of incomparable works publicly silenced with a peremptory "Hold your tongue, Hannes!" if he ventured to make the least unwelcome suggestion. The old gentleman was highly delighted to be back home again. Once there, he could speak warmly enough of his adventures, of all the wonders he had enjoyed and of his son's loving care; but he was not to be enticed away again. On his deathbed—not many years later—he still rejoiced in the company of Johannes, who was with him at the last to close his eyes, and who sincerely mourned for him.

The fruitfulness of these years is astonishing. Brahms's fertility seems the more impressive when one reflects how much time was lost to his work by his travels and his visits to friends. While the first Viennese decade stood under the sign of the voice, the second was to stand under that of the orchestra, which since the Serenades he had used only in conjunction with a choir: he now began with an amply designed and captivating prelude to the four Symphonies—the Haydn Variations—to which succeeded the *Academic* and the *Tragic Overtures*. Thus the series continued down to the curiously sombre and contemplative double Concerto for violin and cello, which would have deserved the name of "Symphony" much rather than many operatic scenes without song and many disguised sonata skeletons which bear it. This is true also of the sparkling triptych of the

violin Concerto and even more of the magnificently rich piano Concerto in B flat major, so new in its solution of the problem of reconciling the piano with the orchestra and even now not fully appreciated in all its fruit-laden abundance. But I anticipate.

Next to the Requiem and the other great choral works a whole garden of songs blossoms. Moreover, one chamber work after another appears, each more wonderful than the last. First in order came the concise and impassioned cello Sonata in E minor. Brahms at that time made a search for Schubert manuscripts and found a number of unpublished and forgotten works, for the publication of which he worked assiduously. He was helped by Joseph Gänsbacher, who for a trifling sum procured him a few of the divine minstrel's manuscripts, among which was the *Wanderer*. As a mark of gratitude, Brahms dedicated this Sonata to the excellent man, who fancied himself as a good singer and a still better cellist. He played it himself with Gänsbacher and struck the keys so powerfully that the latter complained that he was unable to hear himself. "You're lucky," said Brahms and let the piano rage on.

The Waltzes, the *Liebeslieder* and the horn Trio have already been referred to briefly. The Trio received a performance at Zürich that was remarkable for its interpreters: Hans Richter, afterwards so famous as a mighty Wagnerian conductor, played the horn, while at the piano sat Hans von Bülow, who after a period of passing interest in Brahms had once more become a mere spectator, but was now carried away by the woodland magic of the first movement and the devotional calm of the andante,—a miniature Requiem to the memory of the composer's mother,—in fact by the whole golden ripeness of this noontide work. He was in a fire of enthusiasm, though it remained a straw fire until the C minor Symphony penetrated into his heart of hearts. Small wonder that the Wagner community, which had lost Bülow's powerful propaganda and exemplary gift of plastic interpretation through the tragic wrong the master did him, was now the more fiercely embittered against Brahms, on whose behalf the intransigent apostle of a newly-recognized truth used all his energy and that unique capacity for enthusiastic and yet exact interpretation he had once exerted on behalf of the creator of *Tristan* and the *Meistersinger*, and was never so to exert again.

There were two important events during Brahms's first decade in Vienna: the fate of a work and a work of fate.

Carl Reinthaler, the conductor at Bremen and composer of the Opera, *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn*, risked the performance of the whole Requiem in the old cathedral,—the whole as it existed at that time, for Brahms added the movement with the soprano solo later. It took some time and some persuasion to win Brahms's consent. Critical and endlessly intent on filing and polishing as he was, he continued "tidying up with the pen," and his experience in Vienna lay heavily on his mind. At last, however, he assented, and the occasion became one of the happiest and most festive of his life. At the rehearsals he was gladdened by Reinthaler's thorough and sympathetic preparation, which in its conscientiousness and devotion differed so greatly from Herbeck's perfunctoriness. He summoned his friends from far and near and they all came: Joseph Joachim and his Ursi, who performed two Bach arias with violin obbligato before the Requiem; Dietrich, Max Bruch, the faithful publisher Melchior Rieter-Biedermann, and many others. Only one he could not welcome, one whom he was particularly anxious to see on this occasion: this wonderful event, he felt, should not take place without Clara Schumann, who would understand it as no one else. On Good Friday, the day of the performance, however, he had the unspeakable joy of seeing this most cherished of friends seated among the two thousand people whom the service had drawn together. The impression was indescribable. The profoundly consolatory song of death, rising above all sorrow and terror, liberating in its calm confidence, was like a message from above. Those glorious sounds showed from the first bar their power to hold a congregation and even the tremendous pedal-points and the cloistral passages of the menacing double fugue became gradually illumined by the composer's re-creative conducting, as a path leads from out a catacomb into the light of day. Music and environment became one, the Holy Ghost was among them and spoke through the mouth of one blessed of the Lord. And when Stockhausen's warm and soulful voice resounded fervently through the house of God: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days," death lost its terrors and life, a life that could call forth such sounds,

was the richer by a new meaning. From that time on nothing could go amiss with this work; the most unsatisfactory performance could no longer harm it, much less kill it. Ferdinand Hiller, the prepotent and self-assured musical power of Cologne, gave the complete Requiem a year later—his was the first performance with the supplementary movement—and he did his work miserably enough, if one may believe the letters of Max Bruch and Rudorff, which one has every reason to do. In imagination he evidently still wore the famous white trousers he had donned to conduct the last musical festival, and his interpretation seemed to be equally elegant. It did no harm: the public was immensely moved and rejoiced loudly, and a week later the second movement had to be repeated. Bremen urgently asked for a concert performance of the whole work only a month after its first experience of it, and in the course of a year not less than twenty-two performances were given there. And this time it was not merely the limited circle of the master's friends and admirers who knew that Robert Schumann's words had come true, that he whose coming was foretold had appeared. His fellow-men bowed before this work, a work in which we seem to behold the transfiguration of a skeleton with a scythe and hour-glass into a pale youth, wreathed, with lowered torch, in which the ancient conception of death is fused with our own mystical presentiments. Its success may be due in part to the fact that Brahms renounced the dead Latin words in favour of the German Bible text, understood by all; but it is due still more to the composer's feeling that he would have liked to omit the adjective "German" and use the title of "Human Requiem" instead. This is felt throughout. It speaks with human voices and with the tongues of angels.

"What a time we live in! My wife is always saying that you must have gone secretly to the war, but I think that you ought to preserve yourself for the world. Dear Brahms, arise and let your God enlighten you! Write the *Te Deum* that you must write. It is my firm conviction that this is to be the second great deed of your life."

This earnest appeal, addressed to Brahms by Reinthaler in December, 1870, is the outcome of the second event that agitated

and inspired the master in his innermost heart. The war of 1866, where brother fought against brother, he had watched with distaste, not to say with indifference. But now that the old arch-enemy was to be met,—for so it was felt on both sides,—his patriotism burned high. He glowed in an intoxication of enthusiasm; he followed the victories of the German army with tremulous expectation and actually did think day and night of joining it and fighting for the country as a volunteer; he was feverish with impatience, felt that he could no longer stay in Vienna, but desired at least to be in Germany. After the battle of Sedan he could wait no longer and went among his compatriots in order to rejoice with them. His ardent admiration of the old Emperor William and of Bismarck grew to gigantic proportions, matched only by his positively fanatical Franco-phobia. He, most just of men, grew unjust to the verge of unreason. It was not a mere flaring up in a moment of general feeling: it was a lasting conviction. Oddly enough, the free child of a Hanseatic city was now monarchist with the best of them; he once quarrelled to a point where a complete rupture became imminent with one of his dearest friends, the poet J. V. Widmann, because the latter, with his republican views, had commented adversely upon an impulsive and inconsidered speech made by the young Emperor William II. Brahms defended the hasty ruler by saying that he might be liable to an unwelcome human error, but that his goodwill and high aim could neither be doubted nor criticized and that his words were not to be weighed by ordinary scales or measured by common standards. And he could never be persuaded to go to Paris, for all the admiration he excited there.

No wonder that this frame of mind and the rapt enthusiasm of those days of victory produced the work which Reinthaler and several other friends of his expected and demanded: the *Song of Triumph for the Victory of German Arms*, on words from the Holy Scriptures. Brahms originally intended to dedicate the work to the aged Emperor William and his Iron Chancellor, but after some reflection he omitted Bismarck's name and Joachim procured the acceptance of the dedication, which was acknowledged by a polite note from the Imperial chancery. That was all, and it was little enough, if his election, two years later, as a member

of the "Akademie der Künste" was not a consequence of that dedication. The composer must have been heartily indifferent to all this at the time. Later, however, he thought otherwise of orders and distinctions: though he never sought them, he valued them as visible signs of a just recognition of his work. When he received the highest Austrian decoration, the Leopold Order, which he no more wore than any of his others, I myself heard him explain his attitude in words to this effect: "I don't care a rap for decorations, but have them I will." What he thought much more important in those days was to measure the force of popularity that may be innate in a work created in moments of the purest transports,—and this it was granted to him to discover. The *Song of Triumph* was heard in every town in Germany, and it was really admired and praised as his second great achievement. It is in truth a miracle in the vastness of its conception and ingenuity of its composition, which even in Brahms's music is almost unique, and in the mighty simplicity of its themes and its lofty architecture. For all that, it has less appeal for us to-day than the smallest of his songs or any movement in his chamber music which we hold so dear. The blessedness of inspiration seems to be absent from what is only the product of zealous determination. The spirit of war and the spirit of music are strangers and will not look each other in the face. Wagner's quip of the "Handelian Hallelujah periwig," to which as creator of the *Meistersinger* he had the right, though not as manufacturer of the pompous, hollow and tricked-out *Kaisermarsch* of 1870, no longer seems as maliciously exaggerated and unjust now as it must have appeared to Brahms's victory-intoxicated fellow-musicians and adherents in those days. It is scarcely ever sung nowadays, and when it is, we look respectfully and distantly at the ingenious structure and bow before the immense will-power that inspired it. But it is a grandiose piece of work that leaves us indifferent.

The *Song of Triumph* was first performed on June 5, 1872, under Hermann Levi's direction, at the Court Theatre of Carlsruhe on the occasion of a musical festival. It aroused the greatest admiration. Brahms was overjoyed with the performance. "Everybody sang and played," he says, "as if the whole depended on his own effort, which is as it should be if a

thing is to excel. The piece appeared so capitally bold and alive that I could scarcely be surprised to find how it fired the public,—but I shall take care to avoid a second performance.” This last passage is curious. Did he suspect, after all, that he had paid homage to the goddess of war rather than to the angel of peace? Hardly, for in that case he would not have performed the work himself at one of the first concerts of the Viennese “Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde” he conducted,—again with dazzling effect. Not long before he had also gloriously rehabilitated the *German Requiem* by two performances directed by himself. Only now the Viennese began to understand the importance of the work and how unjustly they had treated it and its creator, and it was perhaps a feeling of shame that marked the beginning of a conversion; at any rate, love and comprehension of Brahms’s music began to grow from that moment. The upward curve still progressed in a jagged line and suffered a depression whenever the uncompromising master undertook a work of musical masonry that was found too bald and rugged. But any piece that spoke with gentler voices was readily made the occasion for showing the composer how much his stay in Vienna and the value of his work was appreciated, and there was great rejoicing when he presented an astonished and delighted world with such delectable miniatures as the *Liebeslieder* waltzes and especially the Hungarian dances. The latter at once attained to an unexampled popularity throughout Central Europe, a popularity that was in fact almost vexing, since it affected his other works unfavourably. There is not a little irony in the circumstance that Brahms was henceforth to be the master of the *German Requiem* for all those who are at home in the realm of music, but in the eyes of the rest of the world had his name inseparably linked with the *csárdás*, the *lassú* and the *friss*. He remained for a long time exclusively the composer of the Hungarian Dances, which he had not composed at all, but merely arranged from national melodies. However, this is a chapter apart.

His own piano recitals were before long recognized for what they were: hours of re-creative absorption in his own world of sound and that of others, not brilliant and vain acrobatics; a self-forgetful act of worship and musical offering, not the tinsel of elegant virtuosity. Joseph Victor Widmann, the Swiss poet,

whose charming and thoughtful *Maikäferkomödie* became one of the composer's favourite books, which he presented to all his friends, had come to know Brahms, who afterwards became his intimate companion on his travels in Italy, at an improvised chamber-music evening in Winterthur, the home of his publisher, Rieter-Biedermann. He describes Brahms at the piano in a masterly verbal portrait: "The short, stocky figure, the almost flaxen hair, the protruding underlip that gave the beardless youth's face a somewhat scornful expression, were the peculiarities which struck the eye at once and would have been rather displeasing than otherwise, had not his whole presence appeared as if steeped in vigour. The broad lion's chest, the Herculean shoulders, the mighty head which the player sometimes threw back with an energetic jerk, the pensive, handsome brow that seemed to radiate an inward illumination, and the Germanic eyes which scintillated with a wondrous fire between their fair lashes,—all this betrayed an artistic personality that seemed charged to the very fingertips with the fluid of genius. There was, too, something confidently victorious in the countenance, the radiant serenity of a mind that is happy in the exercise of its art. . . ." The compelling drawings by Beckerath, which most happily capture the attitude and the facial expression of the moment, supplement this picture by that of a grey-bearded Brahms at the grand piano. They almost let you hear the beloved, dream-lost sounds again.

Some six months before the deplorable Requiem incident he impressed the Viennese by two piano recitals, given unassisted after a long interval of silence. He spared neither himself nor his public, for he played Bach and Scarlatti, Beethoven's rarely heard Fantasy, Op. 77, the E major Sonata, Op. 109, and Schumann's Symphonic Studies,—as they should be called rather than *Etudes*,—the last augmented by five variations discovered by Brahms. In order to give the audience something light and pleasingly showy at the close, he bombarded them with his Handel and Paganini Variations, which are indeed exceedingly dainty little virtuoso pieces and, to be sure, childishly easy to grasp, things which only Hannes, the ever-inexperienced, could have regarded as something for the public to gormandize over or to be let off as concluding fireworks. All the same, he

was frenziedly extolled and made so considerable a profit that he could give himself the immense pleasure of sending his father and sister a hundred thalers each, to be spent on nothing but "thoroughly useless, nice things." Even greater was his success, needless to say, whenever he collaborated with Stockhausen or Joachim. With his friend Jussuf especially he travelled to and fro, most frequently during the years 1866-8, visiting all sorts of cities, generally for pleasure rather than for the sake of the receipts, the whole or two-thirds of which he would leave to his partner. Switzerland, towns in central Germany, Budapest, Prague and other places were chosen as stations on these extended concert tours. At Mülhausen Hans von Bülow heard the two, and an old resentment of his melted away before the full and compelling sound of Joachim's violin. "Joachim was like Arion for me: his incomparable playing so carried me away that I silently vowed my readiness to forgive and forget." The immediate result was that he came more closely into touch with Brahms and his music, and the Zürich performance of the horn Trio followed; but it was only three years later that the two great artists who, according to Bülow, supplemented each other like a legislative and an executive power, came into personal contact. They found each other again at Baden-Baden, at the house of the Wagner champion Richard Pohl, and it was a third musician who joined their hands in a lasting bond of friendship that was only to be briefly endangered. That musician was Johann Strauss, who was just then on a visit to Baden-Baden with his orchestra and who intoxicated and excited everybody with his zestful and enchantingly seductive waltz melodies. Brahms and Bülow were as completely ensnared as Wagner by these enrapturing messages of joy in three-four time. The music of Strauss and his winning personality became the link between them and they never lost sight of each other again.

It was some time before Brahms became used to Vienna and its tepid, pampering atmosphere, to say nothing of certain peculiarities of the official and artistic life in the Austrian capital. With politics he would have nothing to do, although he was a keen observer of their procedures; the pettiness and narrowness of the parties repelled him here as elsewhere, and the anti-Semitic

tactics of Burgomaster Lueger, who reigned over Vienna in the 'eighties and 'nineties and was the most popular figure there, must have been odious to one of such liberal views, who moreover counted his best friends, beginning with Joachim, among the persecuted race. I recollect a droll expression of his views. He was asked in my presence by an acquaintance what he thought of Lueger's latest proclamation, and growled in reply: "Next week I shall have myself circumcised!" Which no doubt would have been a convincing proof of his Judaism.

Neither was he in agreement with the conditions of Viennese musical life, especially at the beginning of his residence there. This is how he aired his displeasure: "It is really hardly pleasant here. Hellmesberger and Laub"—a violinist famous in those days and the orchestral leader's rival—"are at each other's throats, Herbeck drowns himself and the public in music,—and then there is Dessoff! Though one may be, as I am, quite unconcerned with all this music-making, one is obliged to breathe the atmosphere and unable to escape it, for all that it does not always smell sweet." His mood, at first sad and dark, only by slow degrees became more comfortable, and two affecting nocturnes describe his frame of mind: the stormy, gloomy and rain-lashed *Von ewiger Liebe* and the moonlit, love-whispering *Mainacht*, two masterpieces of song, be it said, which make it possible to understand why Brahms used to say that he preferred his smaller songs to his larger ones. His lyricism grew more and more into a confession: songs like the passionately despairing *Wie rafft' ich mich auf* and *Der Strom, der neben mir verdrauschte*, again the inexpressibly yearning *O wüsst' ich doch den Weg zurück*, with its longing for the sheltered innocence of childhood, tell of a state of his soul that ever and again finds its interpretation in the cry: "What a life is this, so alone? The only true immortality is to be found in children!" It is a thought to make one shudder that this man, whose love-starved heart cried so loudly for woman and child and who in his lonesome nights groaned and bit into his pillows that none might hear his bitter woe, never truly called a beloved his own, never held the chosen wife in his arms; that he had to carry the needs of his stalwart body into shady streets or to one of those trim and complaisant chambermaids such as she whose name he once found scribbled into

one of his scores for remembrance. That he could never unequivocally express a feeling or a wish, much less ask a favour, and that he was hurt when his friends were unable to resolve the double suspensions of his intimations and circumlocutions, often made him suffer much. He always wanted to have his meaning guessed, and by women too. That on his part he could not fathom others and too often failed to guess their secrets is a fact that cheated him of many things and often prevented his understanding the meaning of a tenderly interrogative, loving woman's glance.

The outer events of his life were none too gratifying during the early years in Vienna. It may be left an open question whether he particularly enjoyed the musical illustrations he provided at the piano for Hanslick's lectures at the University or whether he had an opportunist's reasons for lending himself to the supply of such trimmings; in neither case, even if it amused him at the beginning, can he have carried out this duty gladly. His pupils had to make the best of his peculiarities. He was a very precise teacher with a method of finger training and practising of his own, but not by any means encouraging, for it was his principle, not in itself wrong but nevertheless dangerous, never to incite the student. The most that could be expected as a sign of his satisfaction was the ironical remark: "Well, young man, you may go on amusing yourself in this way." To new pupils he used to say: "You will never hear a word of praise from me; if you cannot endure that, whatever you may have in you is only fit to be left to perish." His was a hardness with which only talents bordering on genius could cope, and it was strangely opposed to the fact that he stood himself in need of approbation. In a letter to Clara Schumann he confesses that he immediately takes fire from a warmly sympathetic audience and as immediately grows cold when he becomes aware of indifference. A heartfelt word of enthusiasm on the part of the most simple-minded member of the audience was enough to make him flush with pleasure, and he never ceased to invoke the echo of his friends' criticism; their admiring comprehension made him doubly happy, self-distrustful as he was, if it showed by reservations that it was sincerely offered. In such things, too, he was difficult to deal with. It was by no

means easy to understand the unresolved dissonances and antinomies of his nature and to take them for granted as readily as those of his music. But they are the same in either case.

The direction of the "Gesellschaft" concerts, which he took over from Anton Rubinstein in 1872 and passed on to Herbeck in 1875, gave him no less trouble than that of the "Singakademie" had done, but more pleasure. He was hardly more considerate to his audiences than before: Handel's *Solomon*, *Alexander's Feast* and *Saul*, the same master's *Dettingen Te Deum*, Cherubini's Requiem, masses of Bach Cantatas, Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, Mozart's *Davidde penitente*,—such were the eighteen-pounders with which he besieged and conquered the bewildered subscribers. They gladly, or at least patiently, put up with all this from him, and after such exacting masterpieces almost regarded as relaxation such things as Schumann's *Manfred*, Mendelssohn's *Walpurgisnacht* and his own works, the Requiem, the *Song of Triumph*, the alto Rhapsody and the *Song of Destiny*, which were more and more warmly received and in the end actually demanded of him.

Truly Brahmsian is a letter addressed to Joachim's wife, who was to sing the solo in the Rhapsody and whom he wished to engage for David in Handel's *Saul*: "'Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite the Philistines? And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.' But you know that David always purloined a good deal from the Philistine gang. What do you propose to do about it? Or in the words of a conductor:—How much do you get?" In the end she was obliged to decline the engagement.

The respect he inspired from the beginning threatened to receive a rude shock after the second concert which, like the second of the "Singakademie," seemed to be under an unlucky star. First of all, Ferdinand Hiller, who had substituted his all-too-well-known Concert Overture in D minor for the *Demetrius* Overture, which had not arrived in time, was obliged to stop the performance and begin again because the over-zealous timpanist had made his entry too soon. The same misfortune afterwards overtook Brahms in Schumann's Ballade, *Des Sängers Fluch*,—a deplorably weak composition, by the way,—where the harpist

had turned over two pages and thus created general confusion. The solo singers failed into the bargain, and only Mendelssohn's splendidly fresh and daring *Walpurgisnacht* saved the reputation of the concerts and their conductor. After that, however, all went increasingly well and the novelties by Rheinberger, Dietrich and Bruch were favourably received. Internal intrigues of a characteristically Viennese neatness discouraged Brahms, who was armed with good intentions, less than the subversive efforts of Herbeck and the objections to his too austere and monumental programmes. Even Hanslick, who was by now disposed to play off Brahms against the Wagnerians, became malicious and remarked in his bitingly elegant manner after a concert where the Bach Cantata, *Liebster Gott, wann werd' ich sterben?* had preceded Cherubini's Requiem: "It is not the custom here, any more than elsewhere, to go to concerts for the sole purpose of being successively buried according to Protestant and Catholic rites." Then came the gigantic crash of the Stock Exchange of 1873, the formidable consequences of which made themselves but gradually felt and had a disastrous effect on the attendance of concerts and theatres. Thus Brahms, who could not write a single line, much less carry out any artistic duty, without feeling an inner need to do so, willingly surrendered his baton to the man who had so eagerly striven after it. With the first performance of Max Bruch's *Odysseus* he laid down his permanent conductorship for ever. Herbeck might be happy in his place, for all he cared: he had rarely been happy himself.

Nevertheless, he no longer thought that he would ever leave the city he had come to love. Once he had regained his freedom, he may have felt as he did eleven years earlier, when he expressed the intention of passing the winter in a small place like Baden-Baden: "A big city is like a desert to one who is dangling in the air as I do." But by degrees he accustomed himself to this state of things. He remained in Vienna, though without ever becoming a Viennese; he lacked the lightheartedness and candour of an easily receptive but unstable temperament. But there is no doubt that the severe north German became more joyously sensuous, more pliable of soul and inwardly brighter here. In the Waltzes, in the endearingly clear

G major Quintet and in many an intermezzo in the chamber music is the mild, sunny air of the Prater meadows and the Danube reaches. The summers, his most prolific time, he spent amidst verdure. From 1864 to 1872 he lived near Clara Schumann at Lichtenthal in the vicinity of Baden-Baden during the warm season. A quarrel with Joachim in which she was not without her share, was enough to make the stubborn master give up his summer residence abruptly, infinitely dear though it was to him, and to send him to Tutzing on the Starnberg lake. Afterwards he went for many years to Thun, so pleasantly situated on its Swiss lakeside, where he plucked one ripe, golden fruit after another. In the last years of his life he remained in Austria: first he chose Pörtschach on the banks of the charming lake of Wörth, where he produced some of his sunniest works, including the joyous Symphony in D major. Next he was attracted by Mürzzuschlag, at the foot of the Semmering, where valleys and gorges offered the most attractive excursions,—he was a keen pedestrian, and remained so until his death. Last of all came Ischl, whither the presence of many friends drew him, for the “solitary,” as he would call himself, stood at that time more in need of companionship than in his earlier years and knew where to find people whom he had previously allowed to look for him,—often enough in vain. That Brahms, thanks to a summer sojourn at Ischl, was brought on the stage in the *Bismarck* drama by one of the most extraordinary and, for all his genius, questionable poets, is probably very little known and deserves to be recorded as a curiosity. But Frank Wedekind, who did this, remained too much a stranger to the master’s character to draw him at his full height. The portrait is an out-and-out failure, and Johann Strauss, who is made his partner in the dialogue, fares no better. Both have remained puppets.

The German’s longing for the land of the golden oranges was his to a remarkable degree. A spring without a journey to Italy he accounted lost, and he knew no better way of showing anyone his affection than by choosing him for a travelling companion to the south or at least trying to persuade him to go with him. Billroth and Widmann, also Goldmark on one occasion, were his associates in the land of the sun, where he was of an entirely

different disposition: glad and unrestrained, insatiable in drinking in all the glory, but also in his desire to introduce the friend at his side to the beauties he already knew and which he must needs share with the other in order to rekindle his own delight. His letters tell us little about these happiest times of his life: he grudged the few minutes to be devoted to writing. But in the uncommonly attractive reminiscences of Widmann, who was most frequently the composer's companion on these Italian excursions, these radiant days may be lived with him.

Thus his life flowed on: inwardly immensely rich and fruitful, outwardly regular. It is in the works that we find the most eloquent diary of an existence that was solitary, yet blessed. It will have to be opened and perused, and the human figures who now begin to take their share in the master's existence will have to be summoned up before the decisive stations of this journey through life can be traced. They are the last stages before the topmost heights are reached.

XIII

ALBUM OF THE VIENNESE FRIENDS

THEY were nearly all musicians: Billroth, the great surgeon, was regarded as at least half a musician. Occasionally the painter's disposition in Brahms's nature was responded to by Anselm Feuerbach, whose work and outlook was like a transposition of one and the same artistic phenomenon, like an experiment on God's part in expressing the same idea in two different ways. (He, however, did not actually form part of the Viennese circle, if only because of his high-minded and uncompromising character.) There were, moreover, three or four married couples to swell the chorus of those who cared for Brahms and gave it the appropriate social and far from philistine tone. The master probably found more pleasure in their company than in that of his colleagues, much as he valued many of them. With all that, it is highly characteristic of him that his intercourse with all these people did not in any single case lead to a real intimacy. For while he was anxious to share in their concerns, he shut off his own from the sympathy of others. He was incapable of laying bare his soul, even before those he trusted most. He was inventive in his attentions and proofs of affection, but would elaborately conceal them under all sorts of sarcasms. With a perverse spikiness he would kill either by irony or by silence any sort of sentiment or solemn demonstration of feeling. His charming marks of attachment he would wrap up until they appeared insignificant, and his unholy glee was as great when he was rightly understood as his silently malicious satisfaction on seeing his intention unnoticed or not appreciated until long afterwards. Altogether, it was none too easy to cultivate his acquaintance. Apart from the fact that conversations and walks with him were strenuous, because he exacted the fullest exertion from his partner, his companions were obliged to be

always on guard to catch the true meaning he would conceal under odd turns of phrase and apparently jocular ambiguities, and to fathom the expectations and intentions he would often express by their exact contrary. It required practice, one might almost say a special technique, of understanding, for it was no simple problem and certainly not one that was likely to be free from the danger of misunderstanding and discord for any length of time. It was, as it were, an intercourse in syncopations, indirect modulations and puzzle canons.

Eduard Hanslick seems to have been most adroit in sailing round the crags and shoals of this friendship. He had knowledge of human nature and diplomacy enough to summon up the circumspection that was needed in dealing with the enigmatic master and his unexpected whims. If both failed him, as well they might in the case of a man like Brahms, who was no mathematical problem and could be neither grasped nor guided by cautious wiles, he appears to have solved the difficulty much as he did with his friend's music, whenever it threatened to elude his understanding, which inclined to the dainty rather than to the profound: he passed it over with an elegant witticism or a charming mockery. The short, cautious, nimble gentleman with his round bald head which was adorned only at the side by spare, long grey hair, his bushy eyebrows below which flashed dark, impenetrably serious, inquiring and sometimes rather coldly gleaming eyes, his moderately sized aquiline nose and his egg-shaped chin, which in his later years was covered with a snow-white beard, was not known to me personally; but I heard his lectures, which were a little disappointing for the reader of his sparkling, accurately formulating and prettily circumstantial featherweight masterpieces of journalism. It was not only that the lectures were fatiguing because of his low and occasionally croaking, though not disagreeable, voice and the curious indifference of his delivery; the content of his course of operatic history was exposed in so bare and colourless a manner in its concision that one could not help growing slack, only to revive when he sat down at the piano to supplement his facts by musical examples. He played everything from memory and it was amusing to see his short, quick fingers scurry across the keys

and quite comical to see him tickle out of the keyboard, so to speak, a strongly rhythmic, hopping polka or a merry, spruce little piece from a French comic opera, which he did with visible gusto, contentedly and coquettishly skipping with the music. He was in his element there, for he loved tit-bits better than the sublime and grandiose in music. When he spoke of a Bach Passion or of Beethoven's late period, one had the impression that he had to spur himself on and that he felt constrained by an embarrassed reverence to which he lent exceedingly ingenious insight but which nevertheless did not come from his heart. There was always a feeling of an insurmountable distance. Those he loved were composers like Auber, Rossini and Johann Strauss, though the last was not understood by him at the beginning. Strauss's first brilliantly captivating waltzes, which he thought objectionably symphonic, he called a "Waltz Requiem," and that gift of the gods, the *Fledermaus*, he welcomed with a strange coolness. Only much later did he feel with others the joyous intoxication of this dance dithyramb.

Brahms was as little deceived by this as by Hanslick's determinedly reverent attitude towards his own works, a mixture of hesitant admiration, conditional affection and apprehensive respect. The criticisms already quoted, and some which still remain to be cited, prove that his adherence was based on reason rather than emotion. So do the master's own words. A few months before his death he confessed his belief that Hanslick never had any real feeling for his music, and I shall never forget an incident on the evening of the celebration of Hanslick's seventieth birthday. Anton Door made a long speech, wallowing in superlatives, and Brahms began to fidget impatiently in his chair; but when Door began to tear himself into ribbons—as they say in Vienna—in his excessive praise of the critic, lauding his comprehensive mind which embraced the whole history of music from Brahms back to Bach, Brahms was heard to snarl with much irritation: "You must mean Offen-Bach!" He knew well enough in his heart what to think of his shield-bearer, sincerely as he esteemed the knowledge, the honest endeavour to establish what was worthy, the dazzling grace of style, the pleasant manner of expressing abstractions entertainingly and often with electrifying wit, the fineness of dissecting analysis

that gave the critic a power which cannot be imagined to-day and was not alone due to the platform of the world-renowned newspaper from which it was granted to him to speak.

What is more remarkable is that the master could rave before others, and in his letters too, over the goodness of Hanslick as a man,—a man whose winning amiability can be detected in his personal recollections. “I cannot help it,” Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann, “but I know few people for whom I cherish so warm an inclination as I do for him. To be so artlessly good, benevolent, honest, earnestly modest and what not, as I know him to be, seems to me something very beautiful and very rare.” A testimony of such warmth must in justice be adduced if it is to be said that Hanslick’s criticisms disclose very different traits and that these were perhaps wrongly interpreted by a friend’s sentiments. For here, as in all the writings of this brilliant artist in words, speaks a cool, cautious scepticism. One would say that he dipped his pen in champagne that was not without a dram of strychnine, and if there was any kindness in him, it was devoid of enthusiasm. What seems incontrovertible is that he was far more honest than people believed and that even his attacks on Wagner were not due to rancour of any sort, but rather to some inner insufficiency; and his condemnation by those who are wise after the event is not without a certain cheapness. In a wider sense it is no doubt true, even if the fact mentioned in Wagner’s memoirs should be questionable, that Hanslick asked him with tears in his eyes to be brought to a true understanding by some adequate elucidation, since it was not ill-will, but merely a painfully felt shortcoming that prevented this understanding, though it may be equally true that this elucidation, promised readily enough, was, according to Wagner, not forthcoming because of the perfidious attacks that immediately followed the request. A good deal worse is the fact that this shortcoming entailed the refusal of everything that was promising, predictive, new and unaccustomed. He judged Bizet and the first Operettas of the Waltz King as obliquely as he did Bruckner, Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss, in fact all who were not born with Hanslick’s own generation. Neither could it be denied that musical politics occasionally coloured his opinion. Richard Heuberger once showed me a postcard addressed to

him by Hanslick, for whom he often deputized as critic in the *Neue Freie Presse*, and I can vouch for its contents. It may still be among the papers left by Heuberger, who for good reasons would not risk the publication for which I begged him. It said: "I have just come from the Rosé Quartet's concert, where Brahms's new Quintet was played. I could scarcely endure to remain to the end, so much did this music bore me. . . . The trouble is that Brahms no longer has any ideas and that he is becoming more and more leathern. After this piece, the Suite by Brüll that followed was a veritable feast with its Bachish euphony." (I only quote from memory, but would answer for the actual words.) That the master's "leathern" work was afterwards honoured by high praise in the paper—and justly so, since it is a wonderfully fresh composition of sovereign workmanship,—while the "Bachish euphony" was dismissed with a few parenthetic words, speaks sufficiently for the method of making musical history that obtained in Vienna during more than a quarter of a century.

That Brahms's friends themselves at times felt Hanslick's want of understanding in his criticisms and wondered how any close human intercourse was possible between them may be gathered from a letter written by Hermann Levi on February 21, 1875: "Some papers here consider that Brahms has been patronized 'in too conspicuous a manner' these last few years. Do not let such enemies trouble you. But you ought to save yourself more effectively from your 'friends.' That notice of Hanslick's of Frau Joachim's concert, where he classes you with Franz and opposes you to Schubert, is worthy of having appeared in a local Munich paper. I hope you have broken off your friendship with him, for anyone who is capable of writing this sort of thing cannot possibly have an ounce of understanding for you." The master passed this over and there was no question of a breach of friendship. He could indeed hardly have entertained any acquaintance with his critics if he had felt inclined to answer each incompetent or ill-considered criticism with a severance of the mutual relations. That his own with Hanslick suffered a variety of changes is not to be denied. At the very beginning he said the most flattering things to him concerning his book, *The Beautiful in Music*, which, he pretends, greatly stimulated

and calmed him; yet it will be remembered how he wrote to Clara Schumann at an earlier date that he had glanced through the volume, but found so many stupidities in it that he did not read on. Since it cannot have become more intelligent in the meantime, he must himself have undergone a change, and it is only too likely that the hated Wagnerism, against which Hanslick's aesthetic study is essentially directed, occasioned this change of front in Brahms,—for any insincere flattery, especially from a motive of opportunism, is simply not to be thought of in his case.

After this the bond grew ever closer. The dedication of the Waltzes for piano duet was its outward mark, and if Brahms, after his early bias, which was humanly understandable in view of the critic's valiant propaganda for one whom he honoured a little anxiously but honestly and whom, incidentally, he gladly played off as Wagner's direct opposite,—if Brahms later gained a clearer insight into the weaknesses and the inward remoteness of this judge, his friendship for dear "Hans," as his acquaintances called him, nevertheless remained one of the most cordial of his life. There are not many of whom the master spoke and wrote so warmly and in so exultant a tone. And since man and artist are ~~not~~ to be separated, whatever the prevalent irrational view of the matter may be, and Hanslick must therefore have been exactly as he wrote,—clever, stimulating, unswervingly amiable, clear-headed, cultivated and sympathetic,—the nature of this relation, whatever its questionable and unaccountable elements, is not surprising.

There was a triumvirate. The third member was Theodor Billroth, whose acquaintance Brahms had made at Zürich and whom he may be said to have followed to Vienna, so strong an influence did the scientist's commanding, self-reliant, manly strength and beauty exercise upon the musician and so inevitably did their kindred spirits, free from any "infamous" optimism and matured in sorrow, incline towards each other. Even outwardly they were of a type: looking at their heads, one might take them for brothers, save that the glance of the one was turned inward while the other's looked boldly out upon the world. That music and medicine are often on intimate terms is a fact

that leaps to the eye, though it still awaits its psychological explanation: most doctors are music lovers and many of them excellent amateur performers. This is true in an even more than usual degree of Billroth, who was a fine pianist and became a violist,—a rather weak one, be it said,—entirely for the sake of Brahms's chamber music, in addition to which he was an accomplished writer on music. This imposing man, with his powerful head carried high, his proudly repelling glance, his noble and strongly carved features, framed by a not over-long but abundant and well-groomed beard, and his muscular, broad-shouldered and energetic body, was a lordly nature and the most sympathetic of friends. Pessimistic and gloomy as his outlook upon the world was, he was apodictically certain, not to say tyrannical, in his views of art and people. Anything that was repugnant to him he judged to be as a matter of course unfit for dispute, and the intolerance he showed to those whose artistic creeds differed from his own was as despotic as was his love for Brahms, once it had laid hold of him. Compared with the measureless injustice of his utterances on Wagner, Hanslick's most biting polemics are the merest sugar-water, and his blind bias accepted Brahms even as a conductor, in which capacity, it is true, he was appreciated by authorities like Hermann Levi, though only in the performance of his own works. How greatly Brahms was attached to him is proved by the dedication of the two string Quartets, Op. 51, of which that in A minor is a pearl in the diadem of all chamber music,—a work that might be written by a Schubert who has read and painfully experienced Schopenhauer. Nearly all the rehearsals of new chamber works and vocal pieces for four voices took place in the music room of Billroth's house, where the whole musical and scientific Vienna was wont to assemble. The letters written by Brahms during his friend's grievous illness, which after an apparent convalescence of some considerable duration led to his death, are in their monosyllabic emotion among the gentlest and most heartfelt testimonies of this obstinately barricaded soul.

Billroth, who on the master's first visit to Italy, was feared by him as a draconian and headstrong companion and guide, left a pamphlet entitled *Who is Musical?* which was edited by Hanslick and was in a sense a counterpart to that writer's book *The*



BRAHMS AMONG HIS FRIENDS

Brüll

Door

Wassbacher

Epstein

Hausmann

Mandyczewsky

Gustav Walter

Hanslick

Brahms

Mühlfeld



Beautiful in Music. I confess that I disclaim the one as passionately as the other, even where they are right, because they are right on the wrong basis. I am, in fact, inclined to answer to the question of Billroth's title: "Not the author." It is often to be observed that the most impassioned musical amateurs base their relations to the art on an immoderate amount of performance rather than on any intimate understanding of that spiritual content that transcends "form animated by sound." At times, indeed, it does not even amount to that. But this is not the arena for disputes concerning the rights and wrongs of those theories and their originators, and it must remain undecided whether Billroth belonged to the kind of musical dilettante I have just mentioned. However, it is worthy of remark that in all the essays and letters written by the surgeon concerning his friend there speaks an intelligent enthusiast who, all the same, finds hardly a word to say about organic features, thematic allusions and questions of form, much less about those "essentials" which, according to Gustav Mahler, lie between the notes. There are only exclamations of noble exaltation which have an aggressive quality, as if they were directed against an invisible opponent. It was an unusual personality that found utterance in all this, one of the most striking figures in Brahms's Viennese circle,—perhaps the strongest and most unified, a tragic striver who had lost the gift of laughter. Whether he was as lovable as he is worthy of admiration need not be discussed.

Gustav Nottebohm I did not know, but he must not be omitted here, for he meant a great deal to Brahms, not least so because, it appears, he was a caricature of the master's own questionable traits and therefore a moral corrective. The letters give but vague and insufficient information about him, and I am obliged to keep to the representation of Max Kalbeck, who shows this eccentric person's nature most convincingly as a distorting mirror for Brahms. He must have been an insufferable Cato, though a man of importance. To this pupil of Schumann and Mendelssohn, who early overcame the ambition of the creative and reproductive musician and devoted himself to research, we owe the laborious deciphering of Beethoven's sketch books and

an insight into that master's workshop without which we had no real knowledge of his manner of composition. But, keen as Brahms's interest was in these and other investigations of this singular man, it was in his humanity and in his inhumanity that the strongest attraction lay, an attraction it was almost impossible to escape. Nottebohm's pedantic reliability of love and order, his uprightness that verged upon disputatiousness, his morbidly exaggerated Teutomania and self-esteem, his miserly economy, but above all his fanatical thirst for justice, compared with which that of a Kohlhaas * was compliant indolence,—all these peculiarities which were but the obverse of a conscientious and spotless character, were of importance to Brahms as hints for his self-education. Nottebohm was capable of depriving a postman of his wretched living for having left a letter with the porter instead of taking it up four flights of stairs, and he curtly and irrevocably dismissed a pupil who had come a great distance to study under him because, all too eager to learn, he had impetuously inquired after the task to be set him at the next lesson. "This ungenerous, small-minded and cruel defender of an abstract moral concept made it a point of honour to obtain, not only for himself, but for others as well, those rights of which the power and the ill-will, the stupidity and the short-sightedness, or the thoughtless and lax conduct of common life deprived them." That Brahms, for whom this hard-headed Westphalian was the highest court of appeal in all questions of musical theory, history and criticism, was so heartily attached to such a man proves that all these oddities were after all of a secondary nature,—originally excellent qualities which had become ossified: devotion to duty and reliability, thoroughly grounded knowledge, responsible sagacity and a boundless love of the cause he served. These were the fundamental traits of the excellent and yet rather petty man to whom Brahms was touchingly faithful. It speaks eloquently for both of them that Brahms invented ruse after ruse in order to assist Nottebohm with money when he was dangerously ill, well knowing that the latter would show him the door and probably break with him completely on being approached with a direct offer; that he travelled specially to Graz in order to alleviate the last hours of his dying friend and in the end to

* Michael Kohlhaas, the hero of Kleist's novel of that name.—E.B.

close his eyes for ever, and that afterwards he recommended Nottebohm's writings on Beethoven to the publishers with fiery zeal until he had the joy of seeing them in print.

It is pathetic to see Brahms ever in an aimless search after human beings, until he suddenly throws himself with all his soul upon a single individual. He, loved by almost every one, would have been so unspeakably glad to love—and yet could not. He offended nearly everybody and repulsed people towards whom he had felt drawn and to whom, as a token of his need for companionship, he had proposed the intimate *Du*, which he did remarkably frequently for a man of his reticence. He was on the whole most constant in his inclination towards men who approached him without susceptibility and with an apparently unceremonious inconsiderateness, though again the truth sometimes appears to lie in the opposite direction. Truly, he was no hero of an artfully concocted novel, but a man full of contradictions. Else he would scarcely have endured the industrious Anton Door, from whom words and music bubbled for ever, who always lived in comparatives and talked in superlatives, a piano master who was not precisely a master of the piano. His hard touch and his hasty nature alone would have been against that. He looked more like a bank manager than an artist, though somehow or other he was an artist all the same and showed it by his effervescent, choleric liveliness, which he deliberately exaggerated. There was a continual whirlpool in him and round about him. He was a short, thickset man with the gestures of a jumping-jack, who gave the impression that he had fallen into milky coffee: his skin, the brittle, curly hair that framed his bold head, the whiskers from which the clean-shaven chin protruded, the mutton chops joined by a defective moustache, even his teeth, all had the same uniform colour of a dirty grey-brown or rather greyish yellow, though he was uncommonly cleanly. The only strong tone in this broad, round countenance was provided by the black pince-nez, from behind which peered attentively a pair of very good-natured, bright and restlessly twinkling eyes. He was regarded as a good teacher and a good fellow: garrulous,—sometimes unbearably so,—ever in ecstasies of admiration or indignation, very jealous of his pupils, who were

all devoted to him, excited and turbulent, a little boastful and fond of drawing the long bow, excessively conservative in his leanings and aversions. He played his part in the Viennese musical life of those days, not unlike his colleague Julius Epstein, whose portrait I have already endeavoured to draw, but who brought up far more significant disciples. Ignaz Brüll, Gustav Mahler and Elisabeth von Herzogenberg among many others give eloquent proofs of Epstein's value as a teacher. Door baptized several of Brahms's chamber works with his drummer's playing, and it is not recorded whether the master was inordinately pleased. A notability he was not; Brahms, however, liked him very well, not least on account of his handsome, Titianesque and very amusing wife, with whom he liked to flirt in jest and converse in earnest.

Joseph Gänsbacher has been mentioned once or twice. He was the moving spirit in the master's election to the conductorship of the "Wiener Singakademie" and increased, especially by his discovery of Schubert manuscripts, Brahms's collection of autographs, a treasure which its owner always looked over with profound emotion and guarded with tenderness. If Gänsbacher, who was esteemed as a professor of singing and feared as a cellist, and was a prominent figure in musical Vienna at that time, had been as distinguished as he looked, he might have become a dangerous rival even for a Brahms. This tall man with his audacious head of dark locks, his pale, keenly cut face, his moderately long beard of deep brown, his eyes with their melancholy glow and the interesting shock of hair that fell over his fine white forehead,—he looked something between Alphonse Daudet and the Flying Dutchman,—was in reality quite insignificant as a musician. But as a human being he had true worth, tempered with a certain vanity draped in melancholy: he was a devoted friend, and the master's spikiness, which was not always to be borne easily, disconcerted him as little as the pathological avarice and the by no means ladylike demeanour of his dearly loved Marie Wilt, who with her giant-bird's voice sang the soprano solo in the Requiem under Brahms. The suicide of this unhappy woman, due to her unrequited love for a handsome youth, brought Gänsbacher to the verge of a breakdown. To

music he was equally faithful, but he could not forbear to compose, mostly songs of a harmlessness that would have been welcomed by a musical *Gartenlaube*.*

Gänsbacher's rival on the cello was Louis Lackenbacher, who was exceedingly witty and quick in the uptake and wrote some neat little things,—cabaret music without a cabaret. He was an original bohemian figure of less than doubtful cleanliness; at any rate, he gave rise to the following conundrum: "Do you know why Lackenbacher always has such dirty hands?" To which the answer was: "Because he is always touching his face." He died after a martyrdom of paralysis, during which he continued to be, confined to a bathchair, a sardonic and amusing representative of those musical Bohemians whose race is now dead—as dead as the fine, warmhearted friendship that united nearly all the artists of those times, whose last descendants in our own time were Arthur Nikisch and Alfred Grünfeld.

Not a type, but a unique individual, was Carl Goldmark who, self-taught, produced a scarlet, heavy-scented, burning melody which stamped him as the only Viennese composer of that time who was of any significance beside Brahms, and for whom the Hamburg master's arrival meant something like a gradual dethronement. It was this, no doubt, which largely contributed to the curious relationship between these two completely antithetical men and musicians, a relationship compounded, probably on both sides, of irritable appreciation, reluctant affection and jealously watchful admiration, without either of them being aware of these conflicting feelings. Brahms liked this colleague, who was about his own age, and knew his entirely personal and exotically ostentatious gifts well; but some imp in him drove him irresistibly to chaff the very vulnerable Goldmark in his easy-going, waggish and provoking way. If his jest was taken in deadly seriousness, he enjoyed himself immensely. He once said to me in a conversation on this subject: "You see, Goldmark is such a capital fellow, both as a man and as a musician; the only trouble is that he is so susceptible, and so I cannot

*A family periodical that has long been popular with all Germans,—some because they read it with pleasure and others because it is an object of derision.—E.B.

forbear to tease him. I am often sorry afterwards; still, he ought not to be so silly and should know how to take a joke." With all his self-esteem, he was too modest to see that Goldmark, who was anything but deficient in humour, was much more easily hurt by him, a greater man, than by anyone in whom he was not interested, and much more anxious to preserve his dignity before him. Brahms himself would have felt no different had he been placed in a similar situation with Wagner. He was not likely to be thus confronted by a man of his own calibre, but there was another reason for his inability to understand this kind of thing: he tolerated any liberty or witticism, even from small people. What, unlike Goldmark, he could not endure was to see sentiment and unctuous praise lavished on his own works. As a pretty proof of this the reply may be recorded which he gave a Rhenish owner of vineyards who, anxious to offer him and some other guests the best he had, opened a bottle covered in spiders' webs with the words: "Gentlemen, this is the Brahms among my wines." To which Brahms smartly retorted: "Then, please, let us rather have a bottle of Bach!" Goldmark would doubtless have accepted the charming compliment with his wise, kindly smile.

The composer of *The Queen of Sheba*, of much colourful and abundant chamber music and of songs concentrated into the essence of magic moods, was one of the most endearing among the eminent personalities it was my privilege to meet. His was an unchanging, clear and tranquil graciousness. It is by no accident that the direction occurring most frequently in his works is "with warmth," and no one could be more fittingly described by the English word "gentle" than he. The short, stumpy man with his clever Slovakian face, brightly sparkling eyes, an ironical and somewhat sensual mouth concealed under a drooping grey moustache, a domed forehead framed by long silver curls and prominent cheekbones, had something infinitely harmonious, clarified and benevolent about him that did not seem in the least to fit in with his sultry, sweetly narcotic, hotly blazing music. He had educated himself and had painfully acquired all that he needed for his art and for his life without the aid of others and without a teacher. In this hard school he had learnt the last things of which a master stands in need: self-

mastery and a readiness to be of assistance to others. There was something so compellingly warm about the pressure of his short, firm hand that it seemed to seal a bond of friendship anew each time. I still feel it almost physically to-day whenever I think of the master who was so kindly disposed towards me, just as I still seem to see him bodily before me, waving his broad wideawake with a sweep of the arm, taking it by the brim with both hands and pressing it down on his brow with his characteristic gesture and then, turning half-round, beckoning affectionately with his hand after taking leave of me at some street corner,—neither of us suspecting that it was for the last time.

He regarded Brahms with a kind of embittered sympathy and oddly mistrustful embarrassment and was unlike himself in his company. Usually cheerful and at ease in society and disposed to jest and chatter, he felt constrained when Brahms was present and his attitude was irritably defensive. After a period of cordial friendship that culminated in the Italian excursion they undertook together, he fancied that he saw in Brahms a secret opponent to his slow, bitterly won, but steady progress. He was quite wrong. Of all human weaknesses envy was that to which Brahms was least subject. It was his misfortune that people would for ever make him responsible for what Hanslick wrote, and Goldmark too was inclined to do so. Brahms could not openly declare his point of view without repudiating Hanslick as critic and friend, and apart from the fact that Hanslick did not deserve such treatment, any such declaration on Brahms's part would again have been interpreted as unwarranted and presumptuous meddling. Do what he would in such matters, he would have been in the wrong. He never thought of specifying his opinions and of declaring his independence of the press, however advantageous he might have found a public disavowal of views to which he was frequently unable to subscribe and the origin of which the public was nevertheless inclined to ascribe to him. But he never did consider his advantage and continued to persist in the attitude that was after all the wisest: he remained silent and resigned himself, in this matter as in so many others, to being misunderstood. Goldmark, however, was not to be dissuaded from his impression that Brahms was not well disposed towards him. To prove his point, he once told

me some rather unpleasant stories of things which surely occurred only in his imagination and must have been unsuspected by the man he accused.

Yet it was not surprising that Goldmark persisted in his uncomfortable wariness and that the two gradually became constrained and laboriously respectful in each other's company. It was sadly different from the time when Brahms wrote this to the Herzogenbergs concerning Goldmark: "I should like to have him here. He is a delightful fellow, such as we have or see, but rarely here." Neither was it to be wondered at that Brahms, who reacted to every atmospheric pressure like a delicate manometer, was somehow aware of the change and became correspondingly cooler and more than ever prone to give the reins to his love of quizzing and teasing. To the inexplicable attitude of one whom he was still glad to meet he now opposed his casual whimsicalities. I recollect two harmless scenes of this kind as well as one that was distressing enough. Brahms, who in 1873 had received the Knight's Cross of the Order of Maximilian and the Commander's Cross of Meiningen, had just been distinguished by the Emperor Francis Joseph with the highest Austrian decoration, the Order of Leopold. Goldmark, though he was later to be invested with the same Order, had for the moment to be content with a "mere" Order of Francis Joseph. He was much hurt, for he was most anxious to be Brahms's equal in outward honours, as in fact he was for a time. But Brahms, of course, now itched to declare incessantly that the higher order made him Goldmark's "superior," and I shall never forget the bitter-sweet face with which the "subordinate" entered into the game and accepted the coarse jests and reprimands, until it became too much for him and he left the room. Another time a conversation at table turned upon the newly introduced Austrian currency of kronen and heller in place of the earlier gulden and kreuzer, and Brahms indulged in the following questionable joke: "Even the Kreutzer Sonata won't be any good now; Goldmark will have to write us a Heller Sonata, though it will only be worth half as much." There was a brief, awkward pause, followed by this repartee: "Not at all, for it will be a Gold Mark Sonata!" It was Ignaz Brüll, the watchful host, who said it and thus saved the situation.

The other incident, however, which also took place in Brüll's hospitable house, he was unable to smooth over. A new Psalm by Goldmark, on Luther's words, "*Wer sich die Musik erkiest*," had been produced at one of the "Gesellschaft" concerts, and there was a gathering at Brüll's afterwards. The composer received many compliments; only Brahms was silent. Presently one of the company was imprudent enough to ask him point-blank for his opinion. He broke out violently, inveighing against the impropriety on the part of a Jew to take it upon himself to set a text by Luther to music. It was impossible, he said, for one of another faith to adjust his mind to a world of poetry that must be utterly strange to him, and the result must necessarily be a false one if he dared to attempt it. There was an embarrassed silence. Goldmark, deadly pale, tried at first to control himself and to defend his point of view; but Brahms, well knowing that he was in the wrong and had gone too far, maintained his argument the more stubbornly, no longer supporting it with reasons, but merely becoming persistently and loudly aggressive. The evening was thoroughly spoilt and the guests parted in consternation. After that the two masters, who could have supported each other so well, for a long time met only formally.

There is no need to labour the point: Brahms was absolutely in the wrong. This deplorable indiscretion is only to be explained by the long-standing grudge he owed a companion who always felt slighted and hurt, and who thus strained his patience. His association with Clara Schumann serves to remind us how a continually aggrieved and susceptible nature irritated him and goaded him into rudeness. The case could not be otherwise explained. I have already referred to his attitude towards anti-Semitism, which he despised; in fact he was a stranger to intolerance of any sort and held it in abhorrence. It is obvious that he could not maintain his opinion seriously in Goldmark's case, else he would have been obliged to take Mendelssohn's *St. Paul* just as much amiss. It is established beyond argument that an artist of whatsoever faith has a right to deal with religious themes which for him are legendary material and involve no dogmatic avowal. Liturgical texts alone had best be avoided by those of another faith; but this does not apply to

words which are concerned not with religion, but with the praise of the "fair art" that must come from the heart of every composer, be he Jew, Christian or Pagan.

Both masters have long lain under the turf. Goldmark survived Brahms by nearly twenty years; but the music of Brahms has outlived that of many others beside the unaccountably forgotten works whose fire will surely again burn through all the strata that have temporarily stifled it. The transports of his orchestral sound, the blossoming splendour of his sensuous melody whose originality is recognizable from the first bar, exuding an intoxicating perfume of nard and frankincense, of eastern roses and the heather of the Puszta, cannot be permanently displaced by the arid abstractions now foisted on us as music. Perhaps it was only the monotonous and stereotyped method of thematic development which impeded the continuous life of this colourful and passionately flaming music. During the last years of his life Goldmark was delightful in the gentleness and wisdom that was the reward of his mastery, and it seemed as if no cloud could again disturb his even serenity. Only when the conversation turned upon Johannes Brahms did his face darken: he could never cease to regret that he had been denied the privilege of going to the end of the way at the side of the glorious composer who was the greatest of his time next to Wagner and Bruckner and remains one of the greatest of all time.

I have had occasion to mention the name of Goldmark's closest friend, Ignaz Brüll, of whom Brahms was fond on account of his childlike goodness and artlessness, his extraordinary musicianship and his incomparable interpretations of the master's piano works. He was one of those untouched, wholly inexperienced people who remain in their first state of innocence and in whose presence no coarse word or vulgar sentiment is ever uttered. As a composer he belonged to the minstrel race of Schubert: the richest plenitude of melody flowed from him incessantly, but he cared little for masterly possession and organization of his inspirations, which he presented with a simplicity of execution that was felt to be too ingenuous even in his own time and denies permanence to his pleasant, songful and heartfelt music. I more than once heard Brahms say that he

envied Brüll the abundance of his melodic ideas; that he would make three works out of what this careless spendthrift lavished on a single one. But he always endeavoured to urge the industrious musician, who yet shirked labour as Brahms himself understood it, to acquire a well-grounded technique. He recommended him to study Bach assiduously and did not fail to direct his well-meant scorn against the composer who, much to his detriment, was spoilt, petted and indiscriminately admired by his mother and sisters and only roused now and again by his intelligent and energetic wife. "Nazi really intended one day to write a modulation from F major to B flat minor," he said, "but the whole family was against it, and so he refrained." Brahms had to give it up, for this natural simplicity could not help remaining as it was. The irresistible magic of an *anima candidissima* emanated from this man of middle height, who was apparently flaccid, but in reality surprisingly strong and under whose bald head was a calm, kindly face with radiant blue child's eyes, a dreamily smiling mouth and a long, fair, silky beard. You succumbed from the first moment to this dear, great infant. Whenever he approached you, like a dreamer, clad in ill-fitting clothes made of the finest material, his crossed hands hidden in his sleeves, it was as if a figure in some old novel had come to life. He was indeed a stranger to his own time, and ours would have blighted him entirely. For all his supreme domestic happiness, he suffered in secret, for the widespread popularity of his famous early Opera, *The Golden Cross*, which was even played off against Wagner, killed his later works, and he grieved over this in the silent way he had of avoiding to trouble others. For all that, he lived happily in his quiet seclusion in the company of his wife and two handsome and charming daughters, with his books and his beloved piano. It was an unreal world, out of which he awoke but now and again, astonished at each strident sound and helpless before meanness, which sickened him and yet could scarcely touch the hem of his garment.

At the piano he was great, especially when he played to a few people at home, people he cared for and with whom he could communicate in his own language. At concerts he sometimes played into his beard, not unlike Brahms, and like that master had none of the professional keyboard tamer's tricks. He

played in an unforgettable manner, with plastic force, transparency and luminous warmth. To hear him interpret Schumann or Brahms was an imperishable experience and he revealed the last Beethoven Sonatas to me—and not to me alone—as no one else could have done. He never took a single page of music with him on his concert tours, for another resemblance to Brahms lay in his faculty of knowing everything by heart, from Bach down to the moderns: his memory was wonderfully certain. An incident, insignificant in itself, delightfully illustrates this rare memorizing power, which made even Brahms give vent to boundless astonishment. I was invited to the Brüll's house with him alone, and he told our host that he had asked a man who claimed to possess manuscripts by Mozart and Beethoven to call in the afternoon. He hardly believed, he said, that they could be genuine, but he had thought that Brüll would be glad to see them and that old autographs were never without some interest. The gentleman appeared and circumstantially and carefully displayed his faded sheets. Brüll sat down at the piano and played the pieces through one by one. It was at once evident that the manuscripts could not possibly be attributed to the two masters, and their perusal showed moreover that we should have to dismiss the possibility we had at first considered that they could be copies by other hands of compositions by Mozart and Beethoven. This was so obvious that it did not even require authorities like Brahms and Brüll to see it. The visitor rose, deeply offended and with a face that plainly showed his disappointment. He took back his treasures and said in a tone of proud mortification:—"And yet these works are by Mozart and Beethoven, and though envy grudges me their possession, I am happy in the knowledge that I count gems my own of which nobody else knows and which, without my consent, no man on earth will ever be able to see, much less to hear." Whereupon Ignaz Brüll shuffled to the piano again with his good, quiet smile and performed one piece after another from memory after a single hasty reading. Long before he had reached the last the owner of these unique works had disappeared in silent indignation. That day I saw Brahms, who had reason to be not a little proud of his own memory, staggered for the first and last time.

Brahms so greatly valued this uncommon musicianship and this admirably intuitive gift of perception that he wished to see his new piano works first communicated to the public by no other than Ignaz Brüll. His orchestral works, too, and especially the Symphonies, he was anxious to introduce to his friends in arrangements played with him on two pianos. The sincere friendship between these two men remained unclouded; it was founded on cordial attachment on the one side and steadfast devotion mixed with the awed admiration of an inaccessible mastery on the other. Brahms always spoke warmly of his dear "Nazi" and was honestly grateful to him for his interpretative services, which neither then nor later were ever equalled; witness, for example, Brüll's grandiose and absorbing performance of the F minor Sonata. He often expressed his gratitude, but it is remarkable that he never did so in the very manner he always regarded as the most suitable and valuable: the dedication of one of his works. Yet Brüll had deserved it as few others.

Max Kalbeck was the master's Kurwenal, ready to go with him through thick and thin, to love what he loved,—not without jealousy, perhaps,—to hate what he hated, and to follow him and his work unconditionally. He was a magnificent fair-haired giant who all his life remained a big, good child, but more joyous than Ignaz Brüll, for whom he had a great liking,—a child impetuously avid of the joy of life. Even in his critic's capacity he remained a poet: sometimes so lyrically exuberant that he verged on the bombastic, sometimes blunt to the point of boorishness, then again murderously ironical, unaccountably intoxicated with enthusiasm or in a raging fury that could suddenly change to a placid scorn; but always inwardly moved and, in spite of the humorous self-possession he liked to display, never indifferent. When this man of more than life-size entered a concert room with his huge wideawake in his hand, the place seemed to have grown brighter from that moment, so radiant seemed his whole personality and so strikingly handsome was his frank and proud face. A blond Antinous head, yet wholly Germanic withal, his abundant, lightly curled hair combed back, so that his noble, smooth forehead lay bare; shining eyes, blue-grey and at times delightfully sly and contented; a bold and

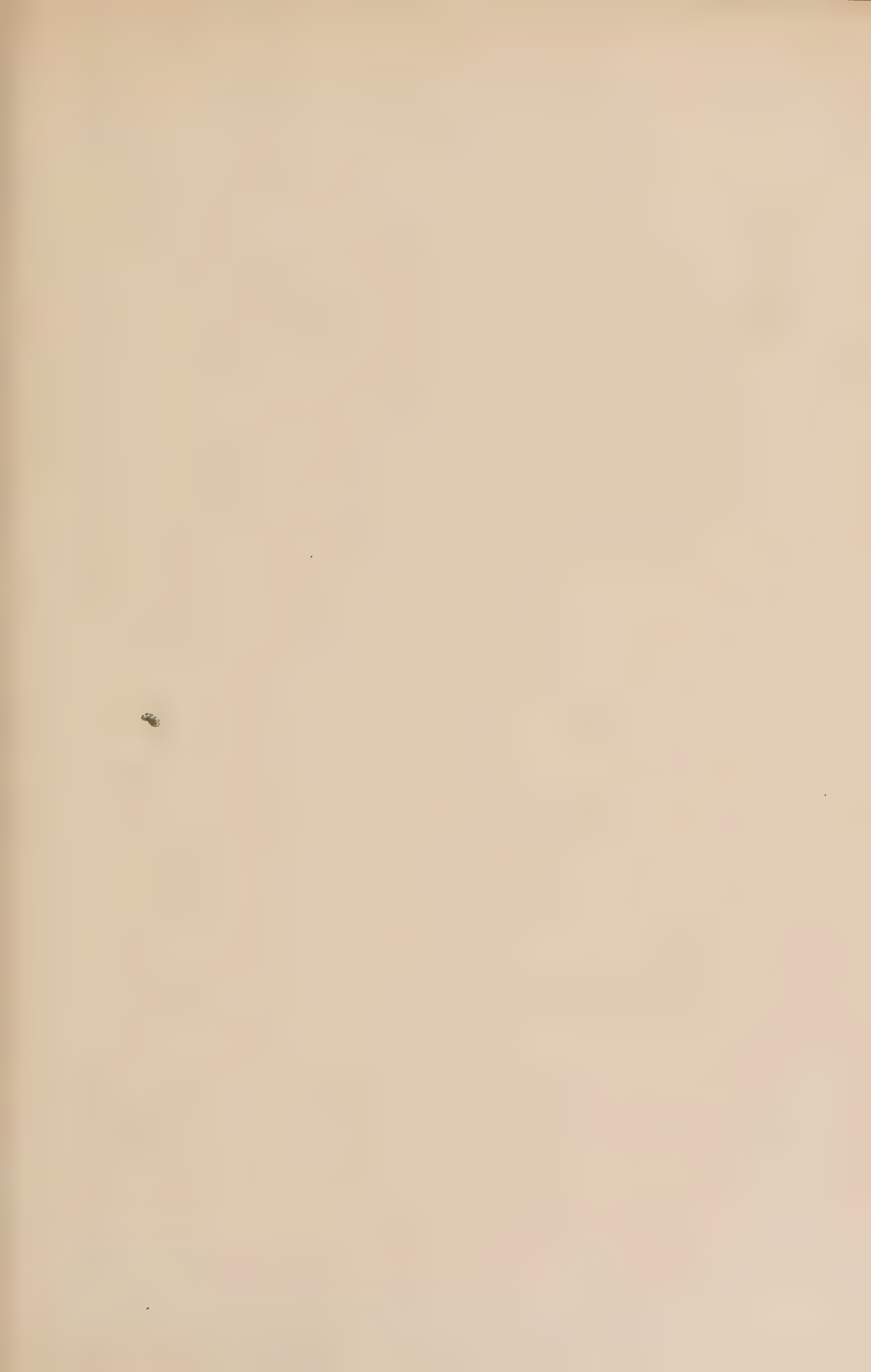
well-formed nose set over a finely arched, smiling and epicurean mouth: thus would a poet look—and he was a poet. He was more captivating while he remained clean-shaven, though the short, parted beard suited him well in his maturer years. His open, flashing, spiritualized mien, his whole being, had something so engagingly luminous and uncommon that one stood spell-bound before his masculine beauty and could not help turning one's gaze again and again upon the personage who so visibly bore the sign of artistic vocation and whose joy in life, good fellowship and sturdy cheerfulness at once dispelled any constraint. I had submitted to him with so much faith that I afterwards hated him for years, for it was his judgment and that of Hanslick, accepted by me untested, that caused me to remain for many years without any understanding of Wagner's art, which afterwards became for me the greatest experience and an unequalled intellectual enrichment and possession. I well remember a night in March, when a performance of *Siegfried* for the first time opened up this world for me. I walked about for hours, sobbing, raving, entranced, and filled with a furious resentment against those who had so far cheated me of all this. I believe I should have been guilty of an attempt at murder had I met Max Kalbeck that night, to say nothing of Hanslick. However, I should certainly have fared badly, for he was an athlete, the pressure of whose paw, in which a normal man's hand disappeared entirely, was one of the most painful pleasures. Perhaps it was a certain pugnacity in him that drove him to pick a quarrel with Wagner and his followers, for he was as heedless and uncouth as a student. Brahms was undoubtedly wrong when he bitingly remarked that newspaper policy and Kalbeck's desire to become Hanslick's successor had something to do with it: an impulsive and upright man like Kalbeck could at most have harboured such a motive unconsciously. His quarrelsome disposition and possibly a misunderstanding of his own ego alone explain the fact that his creed did not acknowledge the radiant world of Wagner, but only the cloudland of the reserved North-German master.

That his was an unexampled love of and attachment to Brahms is proved not only by his immense—only too immense—and wonderfully sympathetic biographical work, but by his unceasing

and indefatigable solicitations of appreciation, his chivalrous intercessions in favour of the frequently misunderstood composer, his fanfares sounded on behalf of the latter's works and his careful, elucidating analyses of their structure. He was the master's strongest paladin. His place was ever near Brahms, that he might teach the harm done by "Wagnerian trumpery." Did Brahms repay him this attentive, unchangeable loyalty as he deserved? I fear not; at any rate, not always, though he knew well enough what an ally he had in Kalbeck and in general proved a trusting friend. The impish spirit of contradiction in Brahms was not to be exorcized even for this most faithful of adherents. I often heard him utter angry and stinging remarks concerning Kalbeck, and one painful scene has remained indelibly impressed on my memory. We were once again at Ignaz Brüll's table and the other guests were Brahms, Goldmark and the unforgettable singer of Loewe's ballads, Eugen Gura. Good conversation and good wine had produced an excellent atmosphere and Kalbeck, who had already indulged in a few sallies at the expense of Wagner and his theories, embarked upon a lively dissertation on what is truly dramatic on the operatic stage. He praised Cherubini's *Medea* as an exemplary dramatic masterpiece, became more and more poetically metaphorical, according to his custom, and could not come to an end. I had noticed all this time that Brahms was becoming increasingly impatient: suddenly he struck the table such a blow that the glasses jingled and shouted furiously at the enthusiastic speaker: "For heaven's sake, Kalbeck, do not talk about things you cannot understand!" There was a startled silence. Kalbeck grew pale, rose and left the room without a word. The others forced themselves for a little while to keep up the conversation, but finally dropped it; Brahms alone behaved as if nothing had happened and the only sign that he was inwardly depressed was the exaggerated mirth that always seized him on such occasions. A few days later I met Kalbeck and found him still sad. "What do you think of what I have to put up with?" he asked. "This is my reward for years of work and faithful friendship and active devotion! But this time I did not pocket the revered master's insults: I wrote him a long letter and told him exactly what I think of him." "Well, and what did Brahms reply?" I asked

eagerly. Kalbeck, with a smile of confusion on his face, looked at that moment like some giant suckling in *Gulliver's Travels* and said, "Oh, well, I never sent him the letter." That was neither cowardice nor sycophancy: this great baby had found it sufficient to work off his anger and mortification in secret. His delicate veneration of one greater than himself, and perhaps the fear of a disturbance in a relationship he prized, as well as the feeling that Brahms himself suffered most from his lack of control, let him silently accept a wrong which even genius had no right to inflict, but which could be forgiven by an understanding votary and balanced against the many human and artistic advantages gained by him.

He was right; for, oddly enough, Brahms in this case entirely agreed with Kalbeck. A passage in a letter he wrote to Levi proves how much he admired this very work of Cherubini's: "*Medea* has again taken an extraordinary hold on me. . . . About *Tristan* we can never stop arguing, but this glorious work we accept silently and as a matter of course." It was, then, once again merely his combative and aggressive devil that seized him, unless his unexpected attack was directed against Kalbeck's repudiation of Wagner. One thing is certain: those who cared for Brahms would have cared even more if they could have seen into his tortured soul, so terribly menaced by doubts and self-dissatisfaction, which the tender-hearted man, who was yet intent on keeping weak indulgence at bay, surrounded with a barbed wire that tore the flesh of many of his friends. But Brahms seemed to trust that those who came near him would understand; at any rate, he asked forbearance of them. In a curiously melancholy letter to Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, who had once again scolded him, he says:—"People should not be offended with me, although I am sure I do not deserve their especial consideration. But, if they once started, they might never stop being hurt, and so it seems preferable not to begin at all." This is what was done in the end by those who were truly devoted to the master who, for all the vigorous health, both of his person and his work, had an ailment in some secret corner of his soul and was driven by his own sufferings to give pain to others. Those who listen with the true loving comprehension to works like the F minor Quintet and many of the songs will know.





BRAHMS AND HANSLICK
A Contemporary Caricature

Brahms again and again discussed subjects for operas with Kalbeck, as he did with other literary people of his circle, including Heyse, Widmann and even Levi and Allgeyer, the engraver, who was also the biographer of Feuerbach. Although he would jestingly declare that he regarded opera very much as he did marriage and was no longer inclined to risk either, he hankered for many years after the creation of a dramatic work. He said more than once that he hesitated to plan a symphony because Beethoven, the colossus, made it difficult for those who came after and a symphony was therefore "no joke," but that the thought of Wagner would not deter him from writing an opera, if he could only find the right text. One need not hesitate to accept such self-confidence in a master who knew the measure of his powers very well and never ventured beyond them. Had he produced a work for the stage, it would not have been unworthy of himself; nevertheless, one may question whether it is to be deplored that Brahms wrote no opera. No doubt it would have proved somewhat—shall we say conservative? It is clear from all his utterances concerning the operatic problem that he would have returned to the old form of separate numbers connected by dialogue. The subjects he thought possible,—a *Ritter Bayard* by Paul Heyse, Gozzi's *Il Re Cervo* or Calderon's *El secreto á voces*,—which he wished to have arranged by Widmann and for which he could not decide after all, make us suspect that he would have turned out something masterly of its kind, but neither dramatically fertile nor greatly moving. It would have been a baroque anachronism, something as stagey and decorative as *Rinaldo*, the work which the Brahms priesthood extols as proof positive of the master's dramatic faculties and which would be evidence to the contrary for his honest admirers, if he had not shown the dramatic musician's true power of expression in his songs, many of which are concentrated tragedies. In any case, his uncertainty of aim, which seems to have been further confused by his revolt against Wagner's principles, would from the point of view of style alone have prevented a work based on such antiquated material from coming to life. This appears to have been felt by Kalbeck as well as by others, much as he longed to work with the illustrious and beloved master. Justly proud as he was of having been made to share in Brahms's

immortality by the setting of his fine *Nachtwandler*, a composition that seems to hover over an abyss and realizes the poem more fully than the words alone could do, and ardently as he desired to collaborate with him in an opera, he evidently guessed that a dramatic vein was lacking in Brahms. He was also of opinion that it was too uncertain whether a libretto, once chosen, would really be set to music, a doubt which in itself conveys a secret want of conviction. He thus insisted on a contract embodying such stringent conditions that Brahms took offence and the matter was not referred to again. It is amusing to find that among the numerous opera books offered to the master was one concerned with gold-diggers in California, which he refused only after some deliberation. The picture of Brahms, of all people, as a precursor of Puccini and his *Girl of the Golden West* is not without a certain piquancy.

Max Kalbeck, who survived his adored master by a quarter of a century, remained the same to his last hour: undismayed, even in illness but momentarily dispirited, clinging fast to life and its pleasures,—of the table, of art, of love or such as he found in his valuable and constantly enriched collection of autographs. But his greatest joy was continuous and voluminous labour, planned on a scale which his industry could never match. He loved merry company as much as profitable solitude. During his last years death more than once sat by the side of his couch, but was scared away again by his invincible humour. And I am sure that when Davy Jones really came to call him to his locker, he insisted on first fraternizing with him over a bumper.

The last survivor * of the circle whose members differed so greatly from each other and who had yet something in common in their views and inclinations, apart from the Masonic sign of their affection for Brahms, was Eusebius Mandyczewsky, who succeeded C. F. Pohl as registrar of the "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde." Mandyczewsky undertook to finish his predecessor's biography of Haydn, but his work, too, hung fire,†

* The author says "the only survivor," but Mandyczewsky died in the summer of 1929. I have taken the liberty of translating the whole paragraph into the past tense in order to bring it up to date.—E.B.

† Omitted from the original :—"and has probably been definitely abandoned by him."

for he preferred to serve life at large. He was a worthy pupil of Nottebohm, little as he resembled him as a man. Quiet and excessively modest, he carried out the duties of his office with the same care and competence, the same unfailing reliability and painstaking exactitude, and above all the same profound knowledge. He was in truth a musical lexicon of flesh and blood: there is perhaps not a page of music of the remotest or the most recent times he did not know thoroughly, no composer of any school and no theoretical question about which he could not give accurate information. He came to Vienna from eastern Austria, and Brahms soon took to the studious and frugal young man, who was versed in the whole practice of his art and who relieved him of many troublesome details,—the packing and dispatching of music, for instance, which for Brahms meant an hour of helpless despair. But he also corrected proofs and made copies, the neatness of which reflected the writer, whose keen and tranquil scrutiny did not leave the most trifling error undetected. He may at first have been a kind of musical factotum to Brahms, but he quickly advanced to the dignity of friend and confidant. He could doubtless have elucidated many things that have remained unknown to the present day or are but vaguely known, and it is to be hoped that, taciturn and almost anxiously reticent though he was, he may at least have left a written account of his experiences of Brahms. About certain periods he must have known more than anyone else. He had become indispensable to the master, not only as an authority on musical science, but as a trustworthy and incorruptible disciple who had proved himself time and again. Brahms valued him immensely and honoured him with an unshakable confidence that was never betrayed. He also thought much of Mandycezewsky's critical faculty and its foundation on thorough competence. Mandycezewsky later became Doctor, Professor and Privy Councillor, but remained exactly as he had been in those days,—dispassionate, obliging, pedantically accurate, reserved and punctual as clockwork in the occupation that filled his life among the shelves of the "Musikverein," where in his latter-day solitude he spent his happiest hours, a scholarly guide and yet ever a student, for there the whole past lived for him again. When this slim and active septuagenarian, who was far from showing

his age, sat in the directors' box with a black skull-cap on his expressive head, looking like a Polish nobleman with his dark and still unbespectacled eyes and his short, broad beard, once black, now a venerable grey; when he but meditatively shook his head on hearing too shrilly raging dissonances, for which he had only an astonished shrug of the shoulder, he looked like a memorial of a time not long past which yet seems so far off to-day that it is hard to believe that we ourselves took our feverish part in its battles and victories, its expectations and felicities.

Richard Heuberger has been dead many years,—a vehement personality and a curiously original musician of abounding and yet restrained vitality, who wrote delightful works bristling with picturesque conceits. His orchestral Variations on a theme by Schubert and many of his songs, particularly the fascinatingly exotic Turkish set, are the best music of the Viennese Brahms succession next to the endearingly gracious, truly and nobly Viennese Serenades by the far more amiable, tenderly feminine Robert Fuchs. It was Heuberger's ironical fate to see his really ingenious and personal works slighted and the negligently, so to speak, left-handedly written Operetta, *Der Opernball*, greatly applauded and giving a popular ring to his name, which had previously been known to music-lovers chiefly as that of a wilful and witty critic and Schubert biographer. The music that was his very own never made its way decisively. This sinewy, broad-shouldered man with his interesting head adorned with black parted hair and an Andalusian beard, his flashing coal-black eyes which sat like jet in his healthy, ruddy face, though at times they had a strangely veiled expression, was a militant critic who liked to leave justice to his Maker, a more competent administrator, certainly, than the very temperamental and intelligent writer who would sometimes let love or hatred run away with him. His offensive obituary notice of Bruckner was with great difficulty forgiven him by those who revered that sublime master, and even Brahms, who was far from being one of Bruckner's admirers, must have refused to acknowledge the doubtful service Heuberger obviously thought he was doing him. He would not otherwise have paid the last honour to the dead composer, among whose mourners he stood visibly

moved in the Karlskirche, where it is said he was heard to murmur "I shall be next." Heuberger was a faithful partisan of his and prized by the master as a man as well. That he enjoyed Hanslick's confidence also is proved by the unfortunate postcard mentioned earlier in this chapter. He died in the full bloom of his manhood,—far too soon, for it was not given him to make the most of his rich and original gifts.

"Children, not another sensible word now!" Wagner was fond of saying when the excitements of a Bayreuth performance were over, and he was then capable of indulging in the most playful and sometimes the silliest pranks. This need to relax after the crises and the stirring adventures of creative labour and to seek amusement in childish nonsense is characteristic of most artists, and particularly of those whose work is of a tragic nature. Johannes Brahms was no exception: he had a bent for harmless mischief that reacted upon the spiritual tragedies of his solitary existence. His dreadful confession that he "never laughed inwardly" even when he appeared merry cannot have applied to his whole life, else he would not have felt so at home in the midst of a circle of literary men who called themselves "The Board of Scoffers" and he would scarcely have been so highly pleased with the diploma of the "Cats' Order" granted him by the head tom-cat Bernhard Scholz and the head she-cat Ursi Joachim, a document that made the new "knight" a confederate of the best artists in Germany, for no others were admitted. The Board of Scoffers was presided over by authors of the rank of Ludwig Speidel, Hugo Wittmann and Daniel Spitzer, and the most amusing journalists of the day belonged to the association, whose members made pitiless fun of each other. Brahms was fond of such sportive and hard-drinking society, and he knew how to appreciate a good aromatic wine; but he was never immoderate, for he hated any sort of dissipation. The punning nickname,* originally given to the publicist Johannes Ziegler, was a perfidious calumny when transferred to Brahms, and it must be the more emphatically refuted because some people dared to connect the master's taste for a good drink among his friends with his mortal

* Untranslatable: *Johannes der Täufer* (John the Baptist); *Johannes der Säufer* (John the Toper).—E.B.

illness. Many must have seen him elated ; none can ever have seen him tipsy. Those who have known intoxications such as Brahms experienced in his music have no use for vulgar drunkenness.

Among all the boon companions of this merry gathering he liked Daniel Spitzer best. This redoubtable satirist, whose " Walks round Vienna " * were looked forward to in suspense each week and generally made a sensation (though to-day, no longer topical, they rarely disclose the devastating effect of their murderous, needle-pointed and coolly destructive wit), showed in personal intercourse a noble, kindhearted and amiable disposition. He made a piteous end: by the fiendish irony of fate this scurrilous wag was to be afflicted with cancer of the tongue. I must once more resort to Kalbeck for the forcible description of a touching incident that should not be omitted, but is not told from my actual experience: " When Spitzer, overtaken by his long and excruciating last illness, was to be operated on again at the Rudolfinum, Brahms came with me to pay him a visit. He presented a picture of misery, seated on a couch with a cork between his teeth and stretching out his lean arms to greet us. Brahms's eyes filled with tears, but he overcame his compassion and snarled at the patient: ' Well, Spitzer, you all right again ? How do ? ' Spitzer smiled painfully and answered with much difficulty : ' Splendidly, as you see.' Then, pointing to his bandaged face : ' A precaution of the highest authorities : satire with a muzzle. I shall no longer bite anybody.' Shortly before his death he told me, at Meran, that Brahms once more came to see him just before he left and wished to press several thousand gulden upon him with the remark that he might again have recourse to his purse. ' I did not need the money as urgently as Brahms believed,' he added, ' but his offer gave me pleasure all the same. And this is the man whom I took to be the greatest of egoists ! ' "

He was not alone in having this experience. Brahms, who concealed all his warm feelings from others, was secretive about his good deeds. He was not easy to match in generosity and infinitely delicate in his benefactions, not to friends only, but at times to total strangers who seemed to him in need and worthy of

* *Wiener Spaziergänge.*

help. And he was anything but niggardly in his gifts, for he often sacrificed incredibly large sums without thinking anything of it. In his own person he was extremely frugal, spending hardly as much as the interest on his considerable income. He could be fiercely annoyed on hearing that one of his acquaintances was in a bad way and I myself heard him say angrily : " Why do people not come to me ? I've got plenty ! " He was utterly distracted by the thought that Clara Schumann was still obliged to toil for money for the sake of her children and was harassed by cares while he " swam in money." He begged her to " summon up all your kindness and your good opinion of myself; listen, and say a friendly yes. If you take me for as good a man as I am and if you care for me as much as I wish, then . . . you will allow me without further parley to take my share in your expenses for the grandchildren with my superfluous mammon, let us say with some 10,000 marks." His old friend having thanked him with much emotion, but declined his offer, he ventured a second time, after an interval of a couple of months or so, to write in these terms :—" Do not be offended if I approach you *da capo*," and, having sent her an even larger amount : " You must not mind if to-morrow I lay fifteen thousand (gained by interest and compound interest!) most respectfully at your feet, and I ask you earnestly to let me know by a postcard that it has got there—and nothing else." Comment is superfluous. This was ever his way: he would not hear of gratitude and could be exceedingly vexed if anyone whom he had treated so magnanimously began to make words instead of just " cordially and simply " agreeing. He always behaved as if it were he who was under an obligation. This was his way with Joachim, on his concert tours with whom he would either take no share in the proceeds at all or content himself with a third. In a collection for the needy Theodor Kirchner and in another made for Stockhausen he took part with very considerable sums and renewed his contributions, always on condition that the recipient should not hear a single word of his participation. What he secretly gave to young musicians exceeded any scholarship, and many owed him the possibility of their artistic careers. There is a composer and conductor, widely known to-day, who could tell a tale about it. When Joachim informed Brahms that an English admirer, Adolf Behrens, who

was totally unknown to him and who had previously desired to finance the London performance of the *German Requiem*, had just died and left him £1,000, his pleasure in so handsome a proof of affection on the part of a stranger was accompanied by the happiness of the thought of being able to distribute the money he had so unexpectedly received. And he actually made over every penny of this legacy to indigent people.

Such was the soul of the man who was decried as cold, hard-hearted and selfish. As a youth he once wrote to Clara Schumann:—"I must confess that I am really avaricious and very glad to get money now and again," which sounds stranger than it is from one who loved to share everything with his friends, who could give the largest sums away as if they were small change and more than once disputed the magnitude of the fees offered to him. As a poor young musician he was naturally pleased and surprised to come into possession of a tolerably respectable amount of money; but from the day on which affluence came to him as well as fame, he knew no greater gratification than that of using his surplus to alleviate the distress of others. The loneliness of one who had neither wife nor child to care for, his isolation, his suffering from an inward contradiction, is expressed as much by such charitable acts as by the affecting sounds of the alto Rhapsody, the *Song of Destiny*, the C minor Symphony and many of the tender middle movements in his chamber music, laden as if with unwept tears, where he seems to discharge his sighs, and his bruised heart is heard beating in unstilled yearning. They tell us more than any words about him and his experiences.

XIV

SECOND INTERLUDE OF THE WORKS

THE *German Requiem* stands at the head, not only because it is the work which first proclaimed the master's imperishable fame, but because here all the glory of his mind revealed itself as never before; because, too, it expounds the highest things, and again because, apart from the overwhelming nature of its music, it shows more clearly than any of the preceding works the pathway Brahms had decided to follow.

It was consecrated to two people whom Brahms loved:—his mother and Robert Schumann. In the notebook where Schumann jotted down his projects the words *German Requiem* are to be found, and it is possible that he may have discussed the idea of a mass for the dead with his friend Johannes, a mass which, if only by its use of a German text in place of the Latin, should speak far more impressively to every mourner than a setting of a dead language the solemnity of which could affect but a few. That Brahms regarded the work principally as a legacy of the master he so greatly revered is to be gathered from many things he said. He was boundlessly annoyed when, through Joachim's fault, a performance at the Schumann celebration in Bonn fell through, although he was himself partly to blame, for he had replied evasively to an application from the festival committee. There was a dangerous and disagreeable tension between the friends. "For a living composer such a performance is desirable as a matter of course and an honour under any circumstances," Brahms wrote to Joachim, "but an honour which modesty compels one to accept in silence, if not to refuse. Now I do not know in the least whether you think me capable of such modesty. However that may be, modesty easily looks stupid and prefers to say nothing—just as I prefer to say nothing to you. In this case, however, if you could think quite simply of the matter and of me, you ought to know how much a work like the Requiem belongs

to Schumann. Thus I felt it in my inmost heart to be quite natural that it should be sung for him." These words, tremulous with a profound grievance, once again reveal the excessively delicate side of Brahms, who concealed his real wishes under a variety of clauses and circumlocutions instead of expressing them directly. He always set his friends riddles the veiled expression of which even the most willing could not always easily guess, and he could be bitterly resentful if he was not wholly understood. But here at any rate he tells us that he began his Requiem in memory of Robert Schumann.

If it was begun thus, it was not so finished: the last movements and especially the fifth ("Ye now are sorrowful"),* which was added later, were sung into his mother's grave. The unearthly, mild and resigned tone of "Yea, I will comfort ye, as one whom his own mother comforteth," could come only from a sorrowing son who misses a mother's caressing hand more than one who calls wife and home his own.

Whatever the occasion to which we owe a mighty work that speaks with the tongues of archangels, it stands as if built for all eternity, a cathedral in music. The architecture of the separate numbers, above all of the second, third and sixth, is matched only by Bach; but within it is an element that makes mere form look insignificant, however grandiose its structure: a humanity which finds utterance in awe and apprehension, in confidence and triumphant victory over death. All form either dissolves or petrifies wherever it fails to become fused with the spiritual content as a symbol of life, and it may be that one or two movements show a desire to create a strict church style rather than this kind of symbolism. Form is here almost independent of musical substance, of the value of the thematic masonry; it impresses by its dimensions and by the law-abiding organization of the interlocked parts. But in those movements, no less ingenious in their polyphonic intricacy, where nothing flows but song, gently mourning, sincerely persuasive, anxiously oppressed, contemplative or consolatory song, the wings of immortality are heard beating.

* I use the singing version for all these quotations, not the text of the English Bible, because the verbal accents will tend to bring the musical rhythm to the reader's mind and so help to recall the themes without reference to a score.—E.B.

The master did not raise his edifice of sound upon a German translation of the text of the Mass for the Dead. He went to the wellspring by taking the appropriate words of exultation, of sorrow, of prophecy and of intercession from the Holy Scriptures themselves. The Psalms and the Prophets, the Gospels and Revelations yielded the separate verses which in this new context became a single magnificent poem of death and transfiguration. But its meaning is only fully revealed by the sorrow-consecrated music which shines in a more and more serene radiance as it proceeds.

How wondrous is the very opening in the dim twilight of its orchestral prelude, which seems plunged into the mysterious darkness of a church by the absence of violins and clarinets and by the division of the lower string instruments into two and three parts. The sorrowful two-bar motif rises up from one voice to another and one has the impression of seeing a tranquil procession of white-clad women walking slowly past sacred pools towards a chapel and singing of the beatitude of the departed when the choir enters with the humbly devotional words: "Blessed are they that mourn." The second theme, introduced by the *oboe*, is like a glance upward towards Heaven. It has, by the way, a very curious resemblance to a theme that sprang from a similar association of ideas, the principal subject of the finale in the *Resurrection* Symphony * by Gustav Mahler, who at the time he conceived this work knew next to nothing of Brahms's music.

The second movement is of immense power; we shudder before this uncanny picture of death's dance by a musical Matthäus Grünewald. Its dark, measured theme was first intended for the D minor piano Concerto, but afterwards replaced by the Benedictus saved by the composer from a Mass of which he destroyed the rest. There is something that catches the breath in this awed procession, dragging and creeping as under a heavy load, this muffled march theme in 3-4 measure for the voices that oscillates round the axis of the tonic of B flat minor, set against the dark and solemn orchestral theme that moves downward in an inexorably monotonous rhythm, coloured by soft harp chords and the muffled funereal footfalls of the kettle-

* No. 2, in C minor.—E.B.

drums. The pacifying motif of the woodwind and violas cannot yet brighten the night around the bowed congregation, nor can the octave leaps of the horns which anticipate the later jubilant octave calls of the sopranos at "The Redeemed of the Lord," like a ray of hope gleaming from afar. And when, after a transition into the major, choir and orchestra unite in a sudden outcry with the theme of the opening: "Behold, all flesh is as the grass," the fear of death that is common to all creatures finds a gruesome, constricting force of expression. The heavenly interlude in G flat major, "Now therefore be patient, O my brethren," lovely and luminous with its enchanting tone painting of glittering harp and flute staccatos and the pizzicato drops of the strings falling around the husbandman who waits to receive the early rain and the late, still heightens the anxiety that seizes the heart at the repetition of the initial section. Neither does the archaic stiffening of the texture at the fugato, "The Redeemed of the Lord," introduced with so momentous an accent, weaken this number, thanks to the warm beauty of the vocal episode, "And tears and sighing shall flee from them," and the indescribable ecstasy of joy at the close.

In infinite humility, but without weakness, the third movement begins with the fervent supplication of the barytone: "Lord, make me to know the measure of my days on earth." There is a glorious moment when soft calls of low horns and kettledrums, rumbling like a distant earthquake, are suddenly silenced and clear woodwind chords are poised as a rainbow while the prayer continues: "Surely, all my days here are as an handbreadth to Thee." The shuddering little phrase at the words "days here" is then spun out into a whole section in ever-broadening melodic lines, the parts interlocked like links in a chain. Here is one of those masterpieces of development without any merely mechanical combination for which Brahms is unique: all is alive and breathes forth in song. The precipitate fall into the unprepared pianissimo at "as nought" is magnificent, and so is the confident and placidly joyous uplifting at "My hope is in Thee," which forms a short transition to the gigantic fugue on the rolling pedal point on D that brings the movement to its conclusion.

Incomparable in its lucid, winged and wreathed charm is the brief choral number, "How lovely is Thy dwelling-place." It

has a transparent, shimmering euphony, and the effect gained by the omission of trumpets and trombones and by the discreet handling of the horn parts is that of a bright morning in spring. Not unlike this in its orchestral quality, but filled with a serious sweetness and pensive melancholy is the movement added after completion with its tenderly mourning soprano solo, "Ye now are sorrowful." It is gently supported by a muted violin melody, planing up and down in the harmonious fullness of a calm quaver motion, surrounded by oboe and clarinet passages and descending thirds for woodwind and merging into the hymn-like, heart-compelling song of a mother's consolation.

The sixth movement rises to the utmost power. The tortuous choral opening, the mystic message of the barytone solo, "Lo, I unfold unto you a mystery," repeated with despondent belief by the congregation (it recalls, perhaps intentionally, the motif of the "Redeemed of the Lord," and the connexion would be clear enough), the trembling of the violas and the anxious wind passages that accompany the continuation of this prophecy of resurrection—all this prepares us for the terrors of the Last Judgment. And now the music begins in truth to storm and thunder in the trombones and tuba, the violins rush up and down in utter dismay, and amid the chaotic clamour of the strings, the roars of the brass and the shattering thunder of the drums, the voices in unison with the woodwind break out into the wildly precipitate chorus, "For the trumpet shall sound." It is as if a crowd, huddled together like a herd of sheep, were shrieking their frantic distress at the opened Heavens. And when at last the prediction of death's defeat is heard and the raging of the elements is drowned by the shout of salvation, "Death, where is thy sting?" that grows ever more triumphant until darkness has wholly lifted, the impression is one of crushing power, lasting beyond the severely Gothic final fugue that seems squarely piled up from material of immense weight. After this the composer lets his work sound its last in the soft glow of eternal blessedness, appeased, rounded off by a return to the mood of the opening with music that is transfigured, more serene, all dissolved into song, without any polyphonic complications and without dogmatic or liturgical references.

It is in such parts as this that we find the Brahms we love.

There is only the Brahms we respect and admire in the others—the bewildering first fugue, overloaded both in tone and in contrapuntal artifices, the hypertrophied second, and perhaps the fugato that follows the dance of death. He remembered here, to the detriment of our immediate enjoyment, though to the advantage of a powerful style, his studies in the company of Joachim, on the continuous exchange of which he was so intent. They gained him his freedom and certainty of manipulation and confirmed him in his desire to have complete command of the old forms which were afterwards so frequently to tempt him to sacrifice glad songfulness in his conscious opposition to the “New German School.” He was then less an inventor than a constructor, inclined to choose themes less for their intrinsic value than for the possibilities of their manifold development. It looks sometimes positively as if he had broken their spine, as they do to children who are to be brought up as contortionists: the theme thus becomes lissom and capable of all sorts of surprising transformations, but is invertebrate. The themes of the Requiem movements just mentioned do not belong to that sort, for they are plastic and memorable, but they nevertheless strike one as artificial. Like telescopes, they can be pushed together and extended, but it is true that they give us a closer vision of the stars. Yet, even if that notorious pedal point was thought of symbolically, as an image in sound of a foundation of unflinching faith, it does not move the soul: it remains music for the eye. To the reader of the score it unfolds a grandeur that can scarcely be grasped by the hearer, who is drowned in an ocean of sound. In the second fugue there is a petrification of those rough-hewn themes which, for all the music’s classic magnitude, has a chilling effect. Its dimensions, more than life-size, are tiring and blunt the ear even to the purely dynamic impression that is foremost in this section of the work; for the thematic material is hardly of the first importance. It is otherwise with the fugato, where a sunray seems to fall upon the icebound themes as upon a glacier and to dissolve them into a melodic waterfall.

It is possible that these cast-iron forms ensure the preservation of the content; it is certain that in many cases they make for a kind of mummification. Brahms more and more consciously put into practice Hebbel’s phrase that it was not a question, either in life

or in art, of inventing an eleventh commandment, but of living according to the ten that existed. His *simplicité sauvage et originale*, which had delighted and alarmed Madame de Mouchanov-Kalergis, grew under the constraint of ceaseless self-control into the deliberate force of a dominating and wisely ordering master, whose self-will at times became obstinacy and whose overflowing invention could turn into frigid reserve. There are works of his—many of his Motets and some isolated movements in the chamber music among them—which, like an “iron virgin” * turned inside out, wear spikes on their surface. They disclose their inward beauty only to those who approach them boldly. Perhaps his musical self-denial was his richest possession and perhaps he gained by the rigid mask behind which one had to penetrate in order to see his gently beaming face. It will be hard to decide, for the very asceticism he so often inflicted upon himself, which seems to fence round and constrain his flow of melody, heightens one’s love for the master.

All this may be subjective, perhaps erroneous, feeling: what is certain is that we can only bow before the insight of a creator of his sovereignty. A work like the *German Requiem* is its own reward. Probably it has already become a masterpiece for all time precisely because it has been constructed by an Erwin von Steinbach of music; and probably it would approach us even more intimately if those immense movements were not associated with the church service and we were free to be spirited away by those lullabies of death, those visions of the Last Day and the anxious creatures of earth, those tender and moving pious complaints, songs of supplication and messages of comfort. It may be, in short, that the awakening is too dearly paid for. But it is an idle speculation, which can be of use only in the study of the master’s development with its frustrated possibilities and its fulfilled necessities. The work is one of the loftiest, one which is wholly ours and has helped to form us. It will not age until humanity has learnt to envisage a new conception of death.

The *Song of Destiny* is the voice of human fate; the alto Rhapsody that of human isolation: the lot which is ordained and

* An instrument of torture in human shape, lined with spikes, not unlike the “scavenger’s daughter.”—E.B.

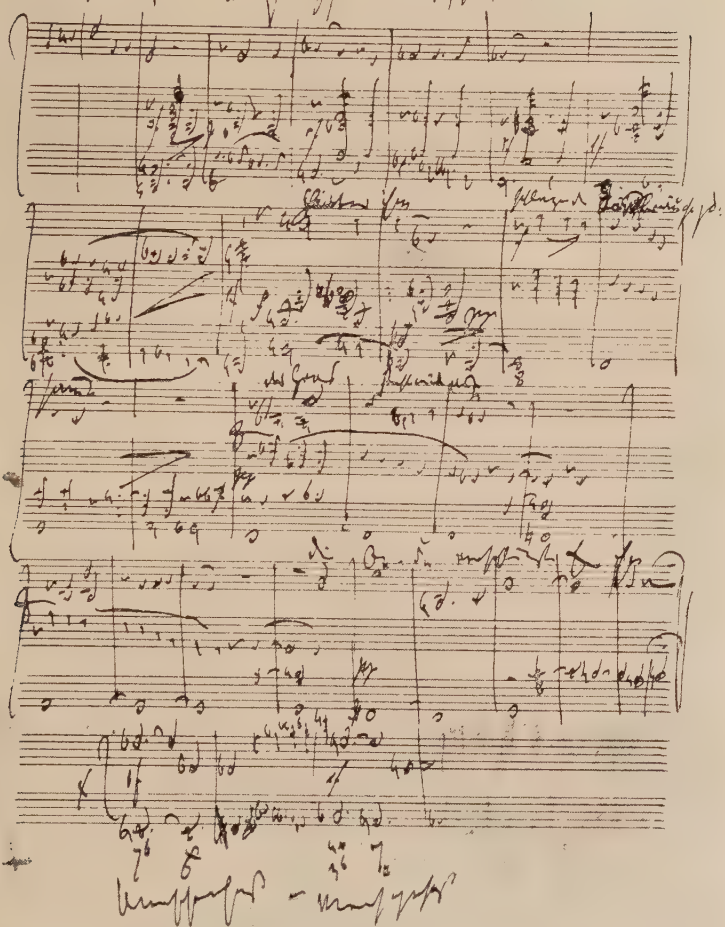
that which is incurred by guilt. Hölderlin and Goethe complement each other in these two works, and their words touch the tone-poet's innermost nerve. Between them they pronounce the maxim that stands written above his whole life. The tragedy of drifting with blind chance and that of being misunderstood and solitary is here brought home to him and clamours for expression in sound.

This is more especially true of the Rhapsody on a fragment of Goethe's *Harzreise im Winter*. How personal Brahms felt this work to be, how much it is the confession of one resigned to bury all hope of love's bliss for ever, may be judged from what he wrote to Reinthaler: "Poor recluse that I am! Have I sent you my epilogue to the *Liebeslieder*?" In the constricted sounds of the opening is the bitter complaint of disillusionment and loneliness; the middle section overflows with the desire for appeasement of a tortured soul that has lost all capacity of joy; in the heavenly song at the end he frees himself of sullen restlessness and a ray of peace falls into the clouds that have enfolded him. Tears flow, and earth has him again.*

The work is a wonder from the first bar to the last—and there is not a bar too much. It is inspired throughout: every note is animated, charged with the deepest emotion. We forget skill and mastery as this wealth of poetry unfolds itself, creatively active and organizing though they show themselves here. There is no artificial flower in this twilight garden, no abstraction and no "fussing," † as Elisabeth von Herzogenberg liked to say of those ingenious thematic intricacies found in many of her admired friend's works, problems in musical algebra rather than musical astrology. The sound is of a silvery delicacy, wholly dematerialized in its veiled convolutions. There is nothing massive here, no trumpets and trombones, no drums or other percussion; even the harp is absent, though plucked strings have to do service for it in the intercession of the final chorus. The natural notes of two low horns alone break with a quiet radiance through the mysterious half-light, while the mutes on the strings, removed only in the tender apotheosis of the close to release the

* *Die Träne quillt, die Erde hat ihn (mich) wieder.* "Faust," part I, scene i, quoted with an adjustment to the third person singular.—E.B.

† The word is *Wuzelei*, which is either slang or one of those private contributions to the vocabulary which German so generously permits. Translation in such cases becomes a game of catch that catch can.—E.B.

absoluten Wais! in *großem und prächtigen*


AUTOGRAPH OF THE ALTO RHAPSODY



full tone, enwraps the whole in a transparent gauze of cobweb tissue. This work convinces one as few others do how thin the partition that separates Brahms from Wagner: this is evident from the very opening with that tired, dragging motif of basses and bassoons, those convulsive cries of pain in the violins and violas, whose heavy syncopations sound as if they echoed the groaning accents of the creeping theme. Again, that working up to a sudden outcry, the heartbeats of triplets in the violas while the reverberations of the call vanish in the distance and the minor thirds of diminished seventh chords trickle downwards in flutes and clarinets; and yet again, the desolate stillness that comes over the music after the contrary motion of conflicting but impotent voices in their last toilsome ascent and hopeless descent—all this might have been the introduction to the scene of the Norns in *The Dusk of the Gods*, the mood of which was anticipated by that, no less fate-laden, of Brahms's work. Further, the contralto voice, breaking the forlorn silence with its dismal question, recites in an "endless melody," in a kind of heightened declamation of benumbed despair: the master of the *Ring* would scarcely have written it otherwise, and it is clearly felt here how artificial the gulf is that was made to open between the two composers.

Compelling in its repressed ardour is the cry for deliverance from joyless solitude with which the second verse opens. The sustained 6-4 measure of the melody, displaced ever and again by an irresolute 3-2 syncopation, the urging, irregular pulsation of violins and violas accompanying the song of the woodwind, the utterances of the contralto, which takes up fragments of this melody as if with bated breath—all this moves the heart with its oppressed yearning. It is a great monologue from the depths of isolation. But now the single voice is joined by the male choir, the shadowy key of C minor makes way for the bright major, and the ardent prayer for relief from a dire languishing in emptiness, borne by the deeper choral voices, is a message of unspeakable intimacy and seraphic consolation. It is balm to the soul.

No wonder that Brahms loved this work so much that he could not bear to part with it and even kept it under his pillow at night. As "a piece of him" * and a mirror of his inmost experiences it is

* A play on words in the original: *ein Stück von ihm* means both "a piece by him" and "a piece of him."—E.B.

hardly approached by any other. Nowhere did he reveal himself so completely as here. All that is most human in him stands divulged. In works such as this Brahms, so self-conscious as a rule, resembles an Æolian harp whose strings are played by the spirit of the world and which answers spontaneously to every breath. Those who have absorbed this Rhapsody and still fail to understand why Johannes Brahms has such a following are past help.

The *Song of Destiny* shows the same blessedness of inspiration; yet, though likewise sprung, as a fiery brook,* from the very depth of his being, this work, antique in its effect and modern in its nature, has not the same character of an immediate confession. Its imperishable, ideally Greek beauty has something more distant about it than the more accessible Rhapsody. It was written in 1871. Albert Dietrich was present at the moment of its conception during an excursion to Wilhelmshaven. "On the way," he tells us, "my friend, usually so lively, was silent and serious. He told us that early in the morning"—Brahms was in the habit of rising at five o'clock—"he had found Hölderlin's poems in a bookcase and had been stirred to his depths by the *Schicksalslied*. When later on, after much rambling and viewing of all the most interesting sights, we took a rest at the edge of the sea, we soon discovered Brahms far away, sitting on the beach and writing. . . . Thus originated the first sketches of the *Song of Destiny*. . . ." It is part of the idea which this work engenders to see its creator seated at the base of white cliffs, against which the deep-blue, foaming sea dashes in great billows, and to imagine the human races represented by this symbol of the world's age-old history:

"We stay not, but wander, we grief-laden mortals,
Blindly, from one sad hour to another,
Like water from cliff unto cliff ever dropping."†

Here again the key is C minor, but it is yearning and has a golden sheen. At the opening, with its long-drawn violin melody through which the regular throb of the kettledrums is faintly

* The author adds :—"let it be understood in a twofold sense," alluding by the word *Feuerbach* to the painter of that name as well as to a fiery brook. The pun is lost in translation.—E.B.

† The Rev. J. Troutbeck's translation.—E.B.

heard, it is as if one felt the glorious air breathed by the gods, and in the A major theme that follows one seems to see the blessed spirits themselves tread the soft ground in a slow and graceful measure, hand in hand, as the pensive melody of the chorus now seems to go hand in hand with the light decorative strain of the flutes. (In the second bar of the latter my previous contention is confirmed by a conspicuous *Meistersinger* phrase, written years before the music to Wagner's poem was completed.) The rising flood of song carries us ever higher and one magical phrase arises out of another: the "sacred strings" resound in broad arpeggios for the bowed instruments and in the calmly expressive, warmly onstreaming B major melody of the divided violins; a short postlude for woodwind recalls one of the Magelone Romances, then a new song swells on ever more fully, until our glance is turned upon human destiny. And now music breaks forth, not unlike that of the vision of the Last Judgment in the Requiem: the strings rear themselves up and fall back again in wild terror, while the chorus tells of the lot of mankind, unable to find rest in any place, in a rigidly progressing song. Even more immensely suggestive is the musical description which makes the fall from cliff to cliff so graphically evident by the detached syllabic treatment of the verses, and no less so the breathlessly uttered song (at the words "at last do we pass away") whose drawn-out sounds seem like an outlook into endless distances. Most wonderful of all, after a repetition of the precipitate movement, is the close. Here all becomes still, the waters are becalmed and a dusky, indistinct distance seems to stretch before our gaze, an endless expanse of the ocean, symbolized by a pedal point that extends over fifty-four bars. And when at the last an orchestral peroration of indescribable and unearthly brightness and mildness begins, leading back to the theme of the opening, now in a clear, spring-like major key, we feel as if stern godhead had descended with serene brow and relenting smile to bring the message of grace that lies in resignation to sorrow. In this tenderly impassioned flute melody there is an exultant note of stilled pain and gentle peace, below which the world's anguish lies at rest. When the theme that seems to carry the earth's misery upward on its wings is heard for the last time in the unrestrained tone of the violins and all seems to merge into light, it is as if fate had been

conquered and the sun were shedding its rays over a world at peace.

It is this inspired conclusion which fully expresses the significance of the poem, and it is curious that Brahms should have considered for a long time letting the chorus take part in this postlude with the repetition of several verses. Only after a good deal of indecision and some experiments, and with the support of Clara Schumann, who, womanlike, felt strongly in the matter, did he determine to reinstate the first, purely instrumental peroration. There is no question that he thus achieved a perfect balance and, above all, the most beautiful interpretation of the poem; for all that, he remained doubtful and wrote to Reinthaler: "The *Song of Destiny* is being printed and the chorus is silent in the final adagio. Well, it is a stupid notion, or whatever you please, but there is nothing to be done about it. I went so far as to put in something for the chorus, but it would not work. Perhaps it is all an unsuccessful experiment, yet any such tacking-on would have produced the merest nonsense. As we have sufficiently discussed, I say something that the poet has left unsaid, and I must admit that it would have been better if that which is missing had been the chief thing for him—but now let me say, '&c.' . . . But should you perform it," he added, "work above all at this postlude. The flutist must play very passionately and a mass of violins must produce a fine tone." Another time he said: "It is after all an occasional piece, and if one may be of the opinion that the poet did not express the main idea, I cannot tell whether it may now be understood."

The "unsuccessful experiment" of this "occasional piece" resulted in what is perhaps the highest and purest that Brahms had to say to the world. He is entirely himself here: this music is free from dross, without conscious craft—human soul expressed in sound. The "main idea," unexpressed by Hölderlin, is made eloquent by every bar of the epilogue, where Brahms interprets it as transfiguring death or resignation to solitude prevailing over the forces of destiny. Such resignation, free from desire, calm and cloudless, is no longer at the mercy of any blind power. Nowhere else, perhaps, did he give such touching and fervid expression to the "recluse's" longing for the peace after victory, such peace as he only attained to much later and perhaps never in

the fullest measure. In the *Song of Destiny* the light of his being shines forth, pure and clear and still.

The *Song of Triumph* and *Rinaldo* have already been discussed, and there is little to be added. The former expresses nothing of the true Brahms but the *furor teutonicus* of a man of immense will-power, a deliberately assumed persuasiveness of patriotic enthusiasm. The latter shows only the musician who, like Goethe in this very case, occasionally amuses himself by excursions into remote times, places and styles, and who fancies that he is beholding himself on the stage of a curiously baroque theatre of magic apparitions. The song of songs upon the victory of German arms is in the spacious manner of Handel, written for masses and directed at masses; a mighty triumphal arch is heaped up stone upon stone, but the elation that prompted its composition no longer affects us. It is lava grown cold and strikes one as artificial, as planned and contrived, not as created and grown. How consciously and without the sudden invasion of unexpected inspiration it is written may be seen from the first bars, where *Heil Dir im Siegerkranz* makes its appearance, first in three accented crotchets and elaborated with archaic angularity into semiquaver figurations, retaining its original sequence of notes, but sprawling in a festively bustling rhythm. It is a theme not invented, hardly even discovered, but merely placed there of set purpose, and its prototype is scarcely to be recognized by one hearer in a hundred. Grandiose as the climax of this "Hallelujah" is, strongly and beautifully as the *Te Deum* itself moves onward, royally as the apocalyptic horseman seems to charge ahead in those galloping, detached string triplets, mightily as the chorale, "Now thank we all our God," binds together, like a *cantus firmus*, the incredibly artfully interlaced themes which jaggedly grasp into each other, it all remains merely astonishing and appears outmoded to-day, in its effect not unlike the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin with its academic quadriga of Victory. Brahms, who thoroughly detested the solemnity of the high priests of art and the unctuous manner in which they like to talk about their productions, would insist on speaking of his works *en bagatelle*, as if he were utterly indifferent to them and thought them quite unimportant. It would not do to take this intentional pooh-

poohing of his own work too seriously, much as this apparent disdain of what in reality mattered most to him was part and parcel of his nature; but when he wrote to Reinthaler concerning the *Song of Triumph*: "It is not difficult—you simply play *forte*," he involuntarily hit upon the truth, and we may well believe him.

The *Rinaldo* Cantata is different. If the Rhapsody and the *Song of Destiny* makes us think of Feuerbach, Klinger and Böcklin, *Rinaldo* reminds us of Schinkel and Genelli. The decorative baroque manner of these two painters closely resembles this music. Brahms must have felt this himself, else he would hardly have written to Philipp Spitta, the musicologist and Bach biographer, for whom he had an especially high regard and to whom he dedicated the Motets, Op. 74:—"The musician must here be something of a Gropius and thus let us breathe throughout the air that is peculiar to the enchantress's island," and with this reference to a stage designer well known in Berlin at that time admitted the scenic effect of this work. *Rinaldo* is somehow related to the Magelone Romances, though these are far more blessed with inspiration, and a truly Brahmsian inspiration at that. But in both works the feeling of something that is literary rather than musical estranges us, and both require a pictorial complement. The Romances do not even help us to a full understanding by the text that holds them together, and an appeal to the senses is wanting. Even Spitta, who thought very highly of *Rinaldo*, felt that it cried out for stage performance. "All this would no doubt immediately become intelligible," he said, "if the action were brought before the eye by scenic representation." This does not solve the whole problem, however: the music has itself something tortuous about it. One thinks of the turnery of old-time furniture with its twisted legs, and cannot help seeing something that is stale, artificially touched up, imitative, even preposterous,—a word at which the pen of a reverent admirer jibs, but which must be written, since he wishes to admire honestly. One may suspect some little affectation in Brahms when he says with mock-modest deprecation to Reinecke, who wished to perform the work at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig: "It seems to me to be a rather useless piece;" but he will not be thought far wrong by those who love the real Brahms whose music blossoms and bears fruit, love him even when, like a ruthless gardener he

prunes away the most beautiful budding shoots, but do not care for the horticulturist masquerading in the costumes of the past, who trims his hedges in the manner of Versailles and lays out straight, artificial garden walls with niches for old-world divinities in sandstone. If *Rinaldo* were to reach one of the true Brahms connoisseurs as an unknown and anonymous work, he would scarcely identify a single one of those musty themes as being by Brahms and rather hazard a guess at Loewe or Marschner. But the work is remarkable as a milestone on the path that led him out of the blissful enthusiasms of his youth towards the purely classical forms that were to receive the abundant ideas of his master period, a path from which he was often enticed away into side-tracks, from green, sunny, windswept meadows into the house of an antiquary with its ancient lumber or into the study of a morose professor of arithmetics who is as pedantic as he is learned. At such times we seem to have a vision, not of the beloved shadow of Johannes Brahms, but of the intolerably orthodox, stiff-necked, rule-abiding ghost of Gustav Nottebohm.

The six chamber works of this period are as similar and as different as half-brothers and half-sisters from different marriages: the same father, but not the same mother, seem to have brought them into the world. One was born of defiant melancholy, another of the insolence of despair, yet another of sadly-sweet remembrance grown into serenity. Those bear the names of the piano Quintet in F minor, the piano Quartet in G minor and the G major Sextet for strings. Their brothers and sisters—the A major piano Quartet and the two string Quartets in A minor and C minor again came from dissimilar, though adjoining, spiritual realms. The first issued from fresh, courageous energy, the second from sweet meditation into which distant voices of sorrow but faintly penetrate, the last from agitated funereal tragedy. The three works with piano are more than those revealing leaves from the composer's diary that may be read in almost every movement of his chamber music: they are luxuriant with invention; one warm-blooded theme urges on the next with imperious eagerness, and once it has come, it will not be refused; the master, who elsewhere pitilessly dismissed the best ideas, if they had not grown out of the whole organism, would here

gladly accept all this wealth and contrive to let the themes grow into the structure. One cannot sufficiently admire the art with which all this profusion is unified while no check is put upon the newly sprouting clusters of motifs. The A minor string Quartet and many movements in the other works in question are jewels in the regalia of music.

The F minor Quintet emerged more painfully than the rest from this reticent man's soul. Neither in the form of a string Quintet nor in that of a Sonata for two pianos would it sound right ; it was only found finally valid when a dialogue between piano and string instruments symbolized the duality of man and his destiny which it expresses. Now it stands before us like a rugged peak in the Dolomites at nightfall, a natural monument of outward strength and inward misgiving. It belongs to the gloomiest and greatest music Brahms has written, and to the bluntest and least accessible too. The first movement at once grips you by the throat: the sword-girt principal subject enters in impetuous unison and the strings cannot at once arrest its bold progress while the piano is wedged fast for a moment in a chord of the dominant; into its violent diminutions from quavers into semiquavers the strokes of the string instruments fall like hammer blows. In the second subject there is a brooding, glowing passion that breaks into cries of grief and yearning; a third quivers downwards in octaves and leads, by way of sighing progressions in thirds, into a fervently pleading short melody which is not enlarged upon until it seems to strive upwards with outstretched arms later on; a fourth theme winds itself round the dominant and, combined with the diminished principal theme, merges into the final phrase, a rising and falling motif that seems to palpitate with repressed sobs. Such is the unusual abundance of themes in this movement, in the working-out of which the subject-matter and fragments of it are interwoven, mirrored in their inversions and fashioned into a veritable tragedy without words. Very curious is what may be called the subterranean transition to the recapitulation: the viola hesitantly alludes to the first bar of the main subject, only to abandon it, the cello makes two irresolute beginnings, delayed by syncopation and groping after the right expression, and it is only then that the others fall in with the diminished continuation of the theme, which they

seem suddenly to remember. The whole movement is as if cast of black steel, while the andante, which moves onward with a wonderful gravity and with a flood of emotion in its melody in thirds, has the effect of being made of bronze. Here again the recapitulation is approached in an uncommon manner: after a shy questioning and answering between violin and piano and the disintegration of the songful theme to the point of vagueness, it breaks into a swelling call that seems as if it would burst the singer's breast if it had to be longer repressed, only to appear once more in its thoughtful and simple greatness in the end. The scherzo, in 6-8 time, held in leash by impetuous and yet obstructing syncopations, is pugnacious and recalcitrant in its rhythm; a serenade of side-drums in 2-4 time then occurs, and the music becomes ever bolder and tauter, until in the trio it is calmed by a firm and confident song in C major. The finale opens in a tone of grave pathos. Voices of the deep struggle through the silence of night; voices from above seem to answer them and are ever again lost in the darkness. It is an introduction of tragic stature, a forecast of the much more imposing one to the final movement of the C minor Symphony; but while that in the orchestral work precedes a glad and tranquil hymn, this leads to a kind of rondo which takes its ease and yet seems to find no comfort. Restless semiquavers in thirds, succeeded by quavers, pulsate through it; the whole is relentlessly whipped onward by syncopations; intervals of fourths and fifths cut into each other, crossed by thematic triplets with frequent syncopated stagnations; the curiously songless, exclamatory second subject with its jerking up-beat brings no ray of light into the movement; the extensive coda, where the themes, dissolved into a more and more precipitate triplet motion, chase each other in the manner of a *stretto*, dashes towards the dark unknown. The composer's heart must have been desolate indeed when he wrote this study in black. It remains one of his most impressive creations, but the affection it arouses is but diffident. One is aware of a grim, panting, hand-to-hand grappling with form. It is a structure made with a clenched fist, not with an easily and lovingly shaping hand.

Nor is the piano Quartet in G minor by any means a cheerful work; but compared with the Quintet it is pure sunshine. I confess to being incurably enamoured of it and am only undecided

whether I am more defenceless before its magic or before that of its companion in A major. Every single theme—and there is a whole blossoming shower of them in both—holds me bound in a spell that wrests the critic's pen from the enchanted writer's hand and makes a dreamer of seventeen of one who has long been grey-headed. If Goethe is still right, in spite of that "new objectivity" which the devil may take with all its cold scepticism, then these two works remain valid. A vernal atmosphere fills them like a warm, fruitful March wind that sweeps across the throbbing earth. This is what Goethe said, in a letter to Schiller:—"It always seems to me that, if writings as well as actions are not spoken of with loving sympathy, with a certain biassed enthusiasm, so little remains that it is not worth discussion." There are not too many works in music which are so vigorously and humanly young as these. The music of Mozart, the eternal youth, is a dance of the gods, an Apollonic round on the isle of the blessed; the evergreen Quartets of the adored Papa Haydn a dance of mankind, of ageless, timeless, serenely animated earthly beings; Beethoven is from his early works in tragic revolt and remains a heroic Titan even in the outbreaks of his grim, eccentric humour; the prodigal Schubert is ever under the shadow of death, in the sublimations of his Viennese mirth as much as in his gloomy moods and his tender melancholies; Schumann is enwrapped in the star-illumed romances of other-worldly dreams; but Brahms in these two works stands firmly on the ground and offers us a piece of his own life, of his youth with all its distresses, its raptures, its frustrations, its expectations of love and a strong courage that will not be disconcerted. It is as if familiar faces looked out of these two works with the eyes of Clara and Jussuf, Ise and Dietrich, of a dear, fair Viennese girl, of the professor's handsome daughter—and not least the luminous blue of Brahms's own. The A major Quartet is heartier and sunnier, that in G minor more pensive and fiery, more deeply saturated in song. Both have a strong and aromatic fragrance, as of a sun-kissed wine.

The first movement of the G minor Quartet, with its twofold principal subject, at first ambles onward in quiet crotchets, intoned in contest by one instrument after another, and afterwards merges into a more animated melody, tenderly wooing and luxuriating in sixths, in whose rhythm we seem to hear the call:—

"Come soon! Come soon! Find your way to me and take me by the hand!" A magnificent second subject is then sung out yearningly by the violoncello, and goes on increasing in ample chords, a song that can find no end, reappearing in two-part canon and with choral reinforcements, only to give way to a new theme which marches on so joyously and bravely in animated and virile quavers as though it went to meet all the world's happiness. An aftersong brings a secret dialogue between piano and strings, which hand the main subject to each other bar by bar until the strings let the final notes sound on while the piano rings a soft peal of silver bells. The working-out has furtive colloquies, faint apparitions of familiar shapes, thematic allusions made to sound like a beating of wings, and violent figures suddenly darting forward and colliding, where the instruments attack each other as with hacking beaks. After some diminutions and transformations of the thematic material comes the conclusion, growing paler and fainter, like an image that fades from a magic mirror. Then there is the high-mettled knights' procession of the andante; in the C major section with its rhythmic $\frac{3}{4}$ motion, one seems to see the sunny banks of the Rhine and its castles, whence armed troopers are issuing. Of a sudden a sound as of cornetts, pipes and tabors is heard—a crowd acclaiming a king. There is the quietly animated intermezzo in C minor with its heartbeats and its romantic reveries, from the middle part of which a song from the time of Raimund * seems to greet us. It is the herald of the intermezzo in the same key in the third Symphony. And lastly there is that gipsy finale, jubilant and sobbing, with twanging dulcimer and raging violins, where Reményi fiddles seductively for the maidens, where scales rush and purl in the piano and the basses hammer, until everything is heard whirling together in a breathless tumult. There is not an empty bar and we find none of those characteristic entanglements, those wayward rhythms and mulish syncopations—only an unrestrained giving from a happy affluence.

Were Clara Schumann and Brahms, who agreed with her, right when they thought the A major Quartet even more beautiful?

* Ferdinand Raimund (1790-1836), author of plays which are a peculiar mixture of fairy-tale and farce, not unlike the libretto of *The Magic Flute*. Songs were frequently interpolated, and that mentioned by the author, '*So leb' denn wohl, du stilles Haus*,' is now a folksong.—E.B.

It depends on whether you play on a clear summer's day or on a cosy winter evening. The principal subject has the effect of a self-portrait: one seems to see in those triplet chords, which follow the first crotchet beat after a breath pause, the energetic, erect head, the blue, flashing eyes and the pensive brow of young Brahms, who may at that time really have looked, as he said in melancholy self-derision, like a theological undergraduate; but the religion he preached must have contained the same creed as that of Wagner: "I believe in God, in Mozart and in Beethoven." Never did youth blaze up in a purer flame than here: the singing second subject carries us towards the light as Ganymede was carried by the eagle of Zeus. Three themes become interlinked and the final subject takes up the first of them, yet grows again into a different shape: there is a continuous transcending, an unceasing ascent to more glowing intoxications in an exuberance of sunny fancies and enamoured dreams. The andante movement has a wondrous song of quiet hours, embellished echo-fashion by the afterbeats of quavers; in the middle section are ghostly, rustling arpeggios in diminished sevenths next to whispered fragments of the accompaniment to the main theme, which rumble in the lower strings and rise to a cry of exalted woe. The quotation to be found here is surely not unconscious, for the meaning of the Schubert reminiscence in those hazy broken chords is clear enough:—a memory of the town where he lost what was dearest to him. The pastoral scherzo has much bucolic mirth and pleasantness in its delightfully graceful, dallying and rocking second subject and the scolding theme of its trio section, where piano and strings alternate bar by bar in imitations. In its taut rhythm rustic voices seem to call to each other: "You wait till I catch you!"; but when major chords begin to hit out vigorously, it is as if gentle women's hands intervened to make peace. The saucily aggressive finale is fresh and enticing. About the chief theme, especially in its *fortissimo* repetition with those snapping appoggiaturas, there is something boldly defiant, a kind of challenge to God and the world. The second subject with its striking modulation to G major by way of F major has strength and warmth, but it is unduly expanded and thus relaxes its grip. The mature Brahms would have reduced this finale to half its length.

Very different is the enticing and unburdened string Quartet in A minor. Here is but fragrance and tender melancholy. A maidenly shyness lies in its appealing gravity; it gives in fact the impression of a beautiful, dark-eyed smiling woman's portrait rather than of the master's own. He speaks to us only in the vigorous finale with its displaced syncopations and its heartfelt second subject, which, however, suppresses the best of what he has to say. The first movement is one of the most ingratiating pieces ever written by Brahms, who here forgets all his asperities: this music is like a dumb, caressing entreaty, and nothing hard, forced or blustering interferes to hide his own emotion, engendered by a feeling of calm, veiled sadness. It is he who is the "twilight man" much rather than Wagner, who was so called by the Wesendoncks. (Brahms once paid them a visit, by the way, and reverently looked upon the traces left by their great friend.) He is a "twilight man" capable of saying things so intimate that they could not be uttered in broad daylight. This is the effect of the first subject with its rising and falling, fondling, but never sentimental song, in whose core lies the life motif F.A.F. inverted to A.F.A., as if it would add to the motto of "free but glad:" "But pious too, fresh and diligent too!"* And what is one to say of the second subject with its quietly shifting little suspensions? It has a modest and confident charm that is hard to describe: a bunch of mignonette, perhaps, around which motes are dancing in the sunlight. It is all so simple and endearing, and very reticent. The theme in crotchet triplets which leads to the close is like a greeting to Weber, the Weber of *Oberon*: fairy tale peeps into the everyday which is itself turned into a fairy tale by love's tenderest emotions. Brahms is not often so near Schubert, so unembarrassed in giving vent to delicious song that comes from a heart at ease, yet remains ever so slightly restrained by unwept tears. Even here he is himself in the half-spoken, secret and pensive questioning of his melody and also in his predilection for various cross-rhythms (crotchet triplets combined with quavers, for example) and for metrical distortions and thematic imitations, syncopated tensions, abbreviations and extensions of the motion, voices overlaid by thirds and indulgences

* In the original the letters A.F.A. are actually used:—*Aber fromm auch, aber frisch und fleissig auch!*—E.B.

in sixths. These characteristics of Brahms's manner are also evident in the dream-tissue of the andante and the short, gracefully hurrying intermediate sections of the minuet, where scattered semiquavers give an effect of a gnats' dance seen in a summer light strained through curtained windows. The minuet itself is a pallid and hardly significant piece. In the andante one is struck by the violent, abrupt accents which burst into the midst of an even, thoughtful, self-communing song. These ill-tempered dotted quavers, rumbling demisemiquavers and triplets hammered out in canon between violin and cello while the middle parts grope hither and thither unsteadily make an impressive episode that is almost operatic—a curiosity in the art of Brahms. The finale, already referred to, is truest, but not particularly strong, Brahms; although it is extraordinarily alive and spirited, it must be said that he did similar things very much more significantly elsewhere.

The thematic material of this winning work is, so to speak, horizontally planned; that of the sultry C minor Quartet, its complement, aspires upward: nearly all its themes have a rising tendency. It is, like its sister work, dedicated to Theodor Billroth, and it bears a likeness to him. Something of the terrorist method of conquest that characterized Billroth's imperious nature seems to speak from the sounds of this sombre and passionate, hard-riveted work, which shows Brahms from his most austere side. A sure sign that the composer was not inspired, that he merely fashioned his thematic material with the utmost energy, may be seen in the finale, which returns to the second half of the principal theme of the first movement in order to derive the conclusion from this fragment. It is an impressive procedure of the highest logic and tenacity of mind, but it remains a contrivance of conscious workmanship and has no place among the music that enriches our lives. The principal theme in question, which is impetuously hurled upwards, is once again a remarkable instance of Brahms's affinity with Wagner, though he cannot have been influenced by the *Ring*, which was unknown at that time; but the primeval motif, especially as it comes rushing up in the wild introduction to the third act of *Siegfried*, presented itself also to the Bayreuth master's reputed antagonist. The scherzo bears for the first time the impress of

those slightly spectral, quietly moving and vanishing intermezzi with an even number of beats to the bar, which take the place of the 3-4 scherzo in the later works of Brahms and are among his most attractive attributes; but the species is still uncommonly dry here and devoid of that ravishing twilight mood that haunts other movements of the kind with friendly dream spirits. Only in the slow movement does Brahms give himself to the full. A lustrous deep-toned melody streams broadly onward, and one parts with it unwillingly. The whole composition belongs to those in which Brahms turns back the signpost; it is in truth "animated form in sound" rather than soul animated by sound. The mechanical mastery is fabulous, but the heart remains empty.

Yet how full it is of happy emotion as soon as the first bar of the horn Trio is heard. I did not enumerate this work above because it belongs to another group, on account of its instrumental combination:—the group which also comprises the chamber works with clarinet parts. From the first Brahms cherished a special affection for the romantic magic of the horn, as the choruses for female voices, Op. 17, testify. That he declined to write for valve horns and would only recognize the hand horn whose natural notes have a fuller quality than those produced by valves, has already been mentioned. It is evident that this entailed restrictions in the instrument's melodic treatment, but Brahms was as little inclined to renounce this whim as that of retaining the old clefs for the notation of the voices in his choral scores, which is questionable, not because of the greater difficulty of reading it involves, but because it confuses the optical appearance of the page. Those who are unable to learn the soprano, alto and tenor clefs may as well be advised to leave score-reading alone, and the last two are in any case indispensable for viola and violoncello parts; but I feel the old notation to be disputable, like many other traditions retained in orchestral and choral scores, because the early clefs make the soprano part appear lower than the tenor.

Whatever Brahms's instrumentation may have lost in fullness and luminosity through his exclusive use of the natural notes of brass instruments, this Trio certainly gained by the practice. The fairy magic of these sounds fills the whole work with poetry. It is an Eichendorff romance in four parts, and each is a German

woodland song that wakes old legends which become one with the dear figures of the present and with a dreamer's memories. The finale has least of this evocative power: its hunting flourishes, uncommonly fresh in themselves and a veritable feast for the virtuoso horn player, are effective, but the effect is too cheap. This at least is the impression after the three preceding movements, from whose world-removed musing the finale awakens us all too rudely. In the first there is the spell of a sun-flooded forest, where a witch's golden hair glimmers through the brushwood, where pines and oaks stand motionless and the goddess of noon walks abroad. Two themes alone conjure up this sylvan enchantment, and the first is not even a real theme, but rather the quest after a melody: the horn seems to be dreaming among those green shades and, in spinning out an improvisation, to produce a song apt to express the past and the enjoyment of security, as if the sunny treetops themselves breathed it forth. In the second, which contrasts rhythmically with its $\frac{9}{8}$ time against the opening melody that continues with its crotchet and two quavers, is full of love's longing, at first expressed falteringly and afterwards with expanding warmth. This movement is remarkable for its incisive themes, at once simple and fantastic: more than that, the master's striving after concentration, which shows itself in his later music, particularly in the chamber works, begins to be felt in this sunlit German landscape; but whereas he was afterwards bent on an energetic and significant curtailment of a working-out that exhausts every possibility of combination, he acted more radically here and replaced the earlier extended working-out by—none at all. He found the broad, dreamily varied repetition of the two expressive themes fully sufficient for the structure of a whole movement, and we may be well content that it was so. The process could not be elevated into a principle, and Brahms did not repeat it: where the composer is concerned with a parable of life, where themes are to be delivered to adversity and fate, they must engage in a contest and thus re-establish themselves on a higher plane; but here, where Brahms only wished to stay and listen to woodland voices and to reproduce the echoes they awakened in himself, the content itself created a form approximating to that of a simple song, which proves, by the way, how little value the composer laid upon mere principle and

doctrines, for all that he was so often accused of doing so. It was only in his hours of self-coercion that he was in danger of allowing "the sonata to make the theme," as he himself expressed it to his pupil, Gustav Jenner. The scherzo leads us past the forest smithy. Hammer blows ring brightly in the regularly beating crotchets of horn and violin after the octave theme in the piano has arrived at a gallop, and the change between two and three crotchets within the same bar-length, which is so characteristic of Brahms, seems to sing out merrily:—"My charger, I will shoe thee now!"—only to stay at once and listen to the trio, where one of Lenau's poetical postilions plays his old-world folk tune, a yearning and amorous romance of the *Biedermeier* time, much like that which his comrade blows in Mahler's third Symphony, which is similarly in the manner of Schwind and Ludwig Richter. It is all a charming genre picture, down to the end, where the scherzo trots off in brave repetition, and it is full of genuine feeling. But the eighty-six bar adagio is vastly different. Even Brahms rarely wrote a piece so soul-steeped and flowing so freely from the heart. There he confided his whole sorrow for his dead mother to the spirits of the Black Forest, whose voices held him in a brotherly embrace, the mother for whom here, under rustling trees, he wrote his farewell and whom he lulled into her last sleep with his tranquil sounds of grief. It is a movement to fill the eye with tears, but they are tears of relief. A bird in the branches sang for him "weaving from woe gladdest of songs: the longing heart grasps them alone!" *

The G major Sextet has already been mentioned more than once, and little remains to be added. Its predecessor in B flat major has more sap; it carries a cornucopia of resplendent melodies and speaks to all who know what happiness and sorrow are. The work in G major is more sublimated, removed from all material sensuousness: it is woven from autumnal sunrays, and this is especially true of the first movement. As for the others, the scherzo is again one of those twilight pieces in $\frac{2}{4}$ time which trip and creep stealthily, like a noon spell; the trim, slightly affected andante, which Hanslick, wittily and unappropriately, called "variations on no theme," is like a series of comely girls' portraits; the finale is busy, frosty and pointed. Each is appealing,

* Wagner, *Siegfried*, Act II (Ernest Newman's translation).—E.B.

finely turned and generous. But the first movement is as matchless as anything he wrote, and even without the thematic reference to Agathe already mentioned, its association with the Göttingen days would have been clear: the soaring, airy principal subject, lifted over the murmuring of the viola into a milder light from the rising fifth G.D. to that of E^b.B^b. and returning from this gently surprising excursion into the key of E^b major quietly to G major, seems to entwine the initials of the names of Siebold and Brahms.* It is by no means unlikely that it was the composer's pleasure in hidden allusion which imparted so irresistible a charm to this theme. The second subject, too, which culminates in the mountain call of that A.G.A.H.É. adjuration (to which the second violin adds the unorthographic D), burns with a fire that does not feed on earthly fuel. Schiller once in all seriousness asked of a sculptor that he should make the portrait of a genius transparent and was very angry when the idea was derided; but he merely made a mistake about the material, for this movement shows that music can achieve what is denied to every other art. It creates the vision of a departing spirit after which a human being left behind on earth calls so longingly that it appears to hesitate and to turn for one instant, only to be dissolved into the light the next. One cannot but reverence the intuitive creator who is capable of discovering in that murmuring viola figure, which continues throughout the movement, the means of unifying his music, who imperceptibly derives one motif from another, finding in each turn the germ of the next, and who, by linking up a variety of thematic elements, produces an organism every part of which is related to the central idea and to every other. One is reminded of Hebbel's dramatic technique, which tolerated no thought that was extraneous to the whole conception and did not bear directly upon the dramatic centre of gravity. In Brahms's later work this logic becomes even more evident.

Where is one to begin, where to end, when it comes to a discussion of the master's songs? They are the jewels of his life's work: all his humanity is locked up in them, and whoever falters and doubts will find lasting comfort and security in these confessions of the most candid of souls. We shall never tire of

* E^b in German is Es=S; B^b is B.

listening to these intimate expressions of his bruised and yearning heart, his manliness and his unostentatious goodness. He who has once learnt how to listen to them will no longer feel held off by this music; he will be aware of nothing but his communion with a great man, who is most lovable when he handles small forms, the most wonderful miniaturist in music, who in the space of four or eight bars can say things which another would take a whole proud symphonic movement to express. Those who have reached the confidential Brahms of the chamber music and the songs can alone wholly understand and love him.

Not all the songs are on the same level. Many of them are flawless and yet deliberated and artificial. This is not always due to the poetry, the choice of which, it is true, sometimes surprises. There are some old-fashioned, tawdry and clumsy poems to be found, poems oddly trimmed with mild affectation or laboriously distilled in the lyric retort. But it is to be noted that Brahms had need of that kind of thing to elucidate by means of music things unsaid or evasively said and that he chose verses which avoid any direct demonstration of feeling and are free from the consequential emotional exhibitions which he detested in any form. All the same, many of his songs are not sung out under God's open sky: they were brewed in the witch's kitchen of musical alchemy, and their gold is counterfeit. Even among the wonders of the Magelone Romances there are a few artificial products.

But stay. Perhaps even here judgment should be suspended, lest such queer specimens of the herbary should suddenly bud and unfold in a protective hand. For the composer obeyed his inner voice alone and left everything scattered on his path that would not become fruitful without constraint. He always declined praise given to his musical ideas instead of to his accomplishments. "Admire! What is there to admire in the artist?" he once said to his publisher and friend, Fritz Simrock. "In me too they insist on admiring things—my invention, for instance. That is hardly admirable. People, who must needs find a name for everything, call it 'divine inspiration.' What have I to do with my inspiration? It is like a grain that lies in the earth: it either germinates or it does not, and in the latter case it is simply useless. If it does germinate and I conceive a melody—well, then I write it down; but I never look at it again, unless it

comes back to me of itself. If it fails to come back, it was unfit for use, and I discard it." He expressed himself similarly to George Henschel by declaring that there could be no question of artistic creation without work: "That which is called invention, in other words a true notion, is, so to speak, higher inspiration and therefore not of my doing. This being so, I could hardly sufficiently despise it, so long as I accept it as a pure 'gift;' it is for me to make it my rightful and well-acquired property by incessant labour. This need not be done immediately. An idea is like a seed which germinates in your mind without your being aware of it. But nothing of it is lost. Should I happen to come across it again a long time afterwards, I find that it has unexpectedly taken shape and that I need only begin to work upon it." It may be questioned whether anything that happens to be preserved in the composer's mind and to return to his memory is from that fact alone a real inspiration, and it is perhaps due to this self-delusion that Brahms thought many ideas that strike us as cold to be worthy of exhaustive and loving elaboration, while others which we should have liked him to nurture tenderly he regarded as negligible. Even those who admire him unconditionally are often aware of calculation and of workmanship due merely to an astonishing artistic understanding which Brahms evidently applied in the conviction that he was employing his genius. Joachim once actually warned him not to let himself be "disturbingly or forcibly urged by his will-power" instead of obeying the dictates of the spirit, and he spoke of a finale in variation form as "*ingeniously made at best.*" Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, the most adoring and understanding of all, more than once had the courage to say:—"here I can no longer follow, no echo is awakened in me. And because I am so anxious to be enthusiastic, not to say warmly prejudiced in favour of Brahms, I ask myself, ever so softly, but still, I do ask myself, whether he does not give us many things in the birth of which his heart's blood had no share, but only, as I have already ventured to say, his sagacity, his refinement, his craft and his mastery. One misses the need that lets the best in an artist appear like something conditioned by nature, something created out of eternity for all eternity." And since Brahms did not reply to this with one of his playful quips, he appears to have been perplexed. At any rate, we may be sure

that he took his friend's reproof seriously and it is equally certain that he must have thought it undeserved, for the very reason that he accepted as fruitful all notions that did not wither of themselves. But neither is it to be doubted that, full of misgiving as he was from the first where his work was concerned, he became henceforth still more stern in judging and rejecting his ideas. His last songs are his most glorious.

Where his notions were spontaneous and worthy of him, where they attacked him by surprise, as it were, and left him no choice, he could be unapproachable. Once heard, they are not to be escaped, and with each new hearing they sink deeper into one's heart. Songs like *Liebestreu*, *Mainacht*, *Nicht mehr zu dir zu gehn*, *Von ewiger Liebe* and *Ein Wanderer*, which have already been discussed, or *Feldeinsamkeit*, *Auf dem Kirchhof*, the *Daumergesänge* and some ten, twenty or forty more, with the *Four Serious Songs*, which are the master's last solitary height and farewell, are—I will modestly speak for myself alone—to my mind the crown of the whole art of song, notwithstanding Schubert and his unspeakably precious and cherished heavenly gifts. Brahms's songs are human gifts, and none but those of Schumann and Hugo Wolf have a similar appeal. But Schumann stands only at the entrance to the path walked by Brahms, who leads to a much closer intertwining of vocal and piano parts, to a greater elaboration of the instrumental background, which is no longer an accompaniment, but reflects the nature and mood of the poetry and at the same time blends into thematic unity with the voice. Hugo Wolf, who in this respect and more especially in the matter of declamation, which Brahms often treats carelessly, far surpasses the latter, is incapable of producing the abundant, warmly breathing corporeality of Brahms's songs; his own have, so to speak, less flesh. They are leaner, more mobile and, as it were, skinless, contemptuously averse to all that is trivial; they cannot achieve the rich pulse of Brahms's melody with its noble liberality of thought that will never stint its material and can ever start fresh impulses. A rich, dark beauty lives in these songs, deeply hung with red melodic blossoms, whose vocal line lies embedded in the instrumental ramifications and grows with them into symphonic oneness. They express everything that lonesome human beings have ever felt of anxiety and bliss, of desire and renunciation, of

self-reproach and remorse, of incredulous happiness and boundless woe. They bring all this home to each one of us as though our own experience had changed to music in our soul; for Brahms, who lived and wrought them, they are a matchless lyrical autobiography into the bargain.

And perhaps there is something more that makes the master's songs so deeply touching: he pours his heart into them and yet, even here, does not wholly disclose it. A rich man ashamed of his wealth, he scarcely ever gave free rein to his overcharged emotions, scarcely ever let himself go in an elemental outburst. Unlike Schubert, he lacked ingenuousness and in his consciousness of his own worth there was nothing of the child, which was perhaps why he was so happy whenever he came into contact with children. He rarely finds an alleviating cry of pain; but when he does find it, when "on Sunday morning" he begins a lonely song, "only to wring his hands until they bleed," his wildly animated melody combines with so disconsolate an expression of pain that the hearer shudders as before a reopened scar. Again, when "before the window" of the beloved he pleads:—"What care I for father? what care I for mother?" and still more when the word is "parting, parting, and parting again," these cries of woe, issuing forth like scalding tears, grip the heart. Even more scarce are the songs where he gives vent to jubilation—and how captivately he can jubilate! For the most part it is either a secret, repressed exultation that will betray itself to no strange listener, as in the seductive and joyously whispering melody, *Oh, come, thou fairest summer night*, charged with the lure of a dusky park, carried by fluttering triplets and the distant horn strain of the piano bass; or it is deputed to another character, as where Count Peter is made to tell the fair Magelone what Brahms himself feels unable to express. But there it sounds a note of bold rejoicing as nowhere else:—"Then wilt thou take pity upon a poor wooer" rises heavenward, and impatient triplets drag the hastening quavers of the voice and its echo in the piano still more rapidly along. It is only where the enthusiasm of requited love calls for expression that the composer cannot find the appropriate tone, for he who was ever torn between hope and renunciation could not here write from experience. All he can convey is a calm, almost surprised delight, and only once does a boundless transport of

joy break out. Yet even here it takes the form of a recollection, of a belated avowal offered as a sign of lasting attachment:—*My love is like the lilac-bush*, he cries out gladly to Clara, but the words are by her son, aged eighteen, and the fiery, elated tune, impetuously carried upward by semiquaver syncopations, becomes a greeting from the past.

But these are not, after all, the songs wherein Brahms lives his life most fully. The truly imperishable ones are those where he confesses to the constraint of emotion, the quietly flowing, half-veiled songs laden with melancholy and with calmly radiant, rich melodic beauty. They contain not a trace of triviality or cheap effect, and consciously though he derives them from folksong—more than half of his songs have folk poetry for their basis—he never strives to please the public at large. Popularity he never courted. Already at the age of twenty he wrote to Clara Schumann:—"I wish the people would forget you, so that you might remain the more sacred to their betters." To reconcile the two seemed to him impossible, and he too chose to remain true to the best.

How lovely these songs are and how they enmesh you ever and ever more inescapably in the silvery network of their sad-sweet, serene, sincere sounds! Could one ever tire of *Von ewiger Liebe*, with its dark evening landscape, that rebellious, bitter and yet loving dispute and that wondrously confident closing melody—taken from a lost Bridal Song of the Hamburg period—where a reiterated F# strikes again and again as a symbol of constancy? Or of *Mainacht*, where the dreamy and euphonious strain is irradiated as by moonlight by slow triplets in the piano, where a pair of doves cooes so rapturously, where tears of loneliness flow so calm and pain-dispelling, and where in addition to all this the musical garment clings so perfectly to Höltz's Asclepiadean verse? Or of *Nicht mehr zu dir zu gehn*, with its heavily dragging, hesitant footsteps and that constricted, death-laden and life-seeking cry of passion? And there is *Wie rafft' ich mich auf in der Nacht*, a seizing expression of fierce, perturbing self-reproach, in the funereal opening of which all hope is carried to the grave to muffled and pain-convulsed sounds. How relentlessly the passage of time is suggested by a mighty, progressive increase of tone in *Strom, der neben mir verrauschte*, and how profoundly

agitated and sullenly repressed at once is the question after the man that was. The Magelone melodies are incomparably noble and rich in their minnesinger colouring that is never artificially archaic: the whole romance of mediæval chivalry and the whole manifold nature of the modern man, Johannes Brahms, here live together. Nothing could be more generously felt than the pensive and tranquil melody in G[♯] major, where some ideal string music seems to accompany the words, *Sind es Freuden, sind es Schmerzen*, and joy and sorrow are curiously stilled. This is true also of the tenderly questioning song in the manner of a barcarole, *Muss es eine Trennung geben*. Nothing could be lovelier and more lulling than *Ruhe, Süßliebchen*, a love idyll animated by pretty nature pictures and converted into the sounds of the sweetest of slumber songs ever sung by lover to his beloved, gently heated by a brooding noonday sultriness alive with the humming of bees and filled with fantastic breezes.

And yet, all these lyrics, which are crowned by the pearl diadem of *Wie bist du, meine Königin*, one of those steadily burning, melting melodies, of which one can never hear enough, so warmly do they snuggle to one's heart—all these lyrics are after all but the harbingers of those exalted songs in which the composer's earthly life, purged of all the world's dross, is mirrored as in a magic crystal. These belong to a later period and must be discussed in connexion with it and with the other works of the closing years. Only one enchanting composition of the earlier days in Vienna still remains to be dealt with:—the *Liebeslieder*. It was thus that Brahms called the eighteen waltzes for piano duet and vocal quartet which the mild air of Vienna lured from him. They are unique little masterpieces. The piano part is in itself a delicious waltz suite and the voices add a second that is often quite independent, though only in their combination do they yield that intimate charm with which it is impossible not to fall in love. The waltzes are simple, generally laid out in periods of eight bars, and remind one of the manner of Schubert's *Deutsche Tänze* and Lanner's waltzes. There is not a trace of the luxurious, mundane brilliancy with which Liszt invested Schubert's simple and heartfelt melodies in the *Soirées de Vienne*: vintagers and boatmen may be imagined singing these love songs with their girls much rather than the perfumed ladies who dance their

rounds to Liszt's dazzling and fascinating sounds. Numbers like *Am Donaustrand, da steht ein Haus*, with its exceedingly pretty homage to Johann Strauss by means of a hidden quotation of the first bar of the *Blue Danube* waltz; the gipsy-like, impetuous *Nein, es ist nicht auszuhalten*, recalcitrant in its three-bar rhythm and truly Brahmsian in its asperity; the spruce country dance of the "little, pretty bird"; the sweet warbling of the "nightingale"; the tenderly solicitous *Nicht wandle, mein Licht*—all these are the upshot of the pleasantest hours in the composer's life, and I have chosen them quite at random. The later set of *Liebeslieder* waltzes is not so innocent and unconstrained as the first. It is at once more melancholy and more artful. Life's experiences are seen to have spread their pale shadows over them and they make one realize that Brahms was pouring out his gratitude to his beloved art for having saved him from callousness and desolation. Goethe's final words in this second series of love songs express this sentiment:—

“Now, ye Muses, enough! For vainly strive ye to tell us
How that grief and delight change in the amorous breast.
Heal them ye cannot, the wounds which Cupid hath dealt us,
Yet to assuage us, ye fair ones, is your task alone.”

Brahms, whose yearning never ceased, fulfilled in song what life withheld from him. The gain is ours, but the price was high, and his own words, which shall be repeated here, are deeply affecting:—the love songs, he said, found their epilogue, but only in the profoundly sorrowful Rhapsody of one whom life had left solitary.

XV

STATIONS ON LIFE'S JOURNEY

IT was an epic and lyrical life, not a dramatic one, which Johannes Brahms had so far led, and was to lead to the end. He could not have endured a catastrophic existence like that of Wagner, which continues in the tragic conflagration of the wholly scenic music of his dramas. Indeed, if it did not sound unduly paradoxical, one would be tempted to say that Brahms's music could not have permitted a life of this sort. On contemplating the work and the fate of the great composers one is often moved to ask whether their lives have conditioned their music or the reverse. At any rate, one may well believe that the two react upon each other, and who knows whether life would not have grown kinder to Brahms if he had not produced so much music expressive of resignation, of melancholy and of loneliness.

From the time of his resignation of the "Singverein" conductorship people in Vienna began at last to realize fully what they possessed in him. The "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde" elected him an honorary member. This led to a similar honour from the Leipzig choral society, "Paulus," and England even wanted to make him an honorary doctor of music: the University of Cambridge offered him a degree. But since he would have been obliged to go there and to take part in the solemn mediæval ceremonies, he merely smiled and remained snugly at home. Joachim, on whom the same honour was to be conferred at that time, was already in England and could thus attend a function of this kind with far less trouble. Moreover, a doctor's degree *honoris causa* probably was more important to him than to his philosophical friend, who remarked with a spice of humour that Joachim might assume the Cambridge cap and gown for him as well. That, however, was not permissible, and he remained uninvested on that occasion. The University of Breslau after-

wards made up for what he had missed and he rendered thanks for the bestowal of the honorary doctor's degree with an artist's liberality. He wrote the *Academic Festival Overture* which, on account of the jolly noise of its merry students' songs and its sumptuous close on "Gaudeamus igitur," he liked to dub the janizaries' overture. He did not hold honours in contempt, as I have already said, but the glitter of tears in an eye after the performance of one of his works meant far more to him than any official distinctions, which he calmly assumed to be a tribute due to his work. Even on the occasion on which his native Hamburg conferred the freedom of the city upon him, he said that he rated the inspiration of a beautiful melody higher than any decoration and that the successful completion of a symphony was for him a joy to be matched by no honorary citizenship; and yet this very distinction gave him the profoundest pleasure as an atonement for many a wrong Hamburg had done him and as "the best that could have come to him from mankind." But, be it understood, only from mankind, and he lived with the gods.

Towards the close of the 'seventies there raged a petty musicians' war which Brahms, who was the cause, watched with the utmost placidity, though he may more than once have been fiercely angry to find that he was regarded as one of themselves by the dregs of the profession. The Hungarian Dances were the motive. Brahms was accused of nothing less than plagiarism, in fact of more than that—of theft. He was charged with having not only borrowed tunes written by others and claimed their arrangement for his property, but with having simply copied the arrangement itself and illegally put his name to the copy. And to make confusion worse confounded the publisher, Simrock, began a law-suit against a certain gentleman whom he accused of having in turn plagiarized Brahms by a mere hasty transcription of the dances that hardly concealed its source. The case is too instructive to be passed over. Even those who have no idea of the master's uprightness need but look at a single bar of this admirably "captured" music, which lures from the piano all the fiery fiddling, the dulcimer vibrations, the trilling, beating and clanking of gipsydom with its hotly spiced and languishing melodies, in order to recognize the specifically Brahmsian quality

of sound and harmony and texture unmistakably. Only stupidity or deliberate spite could have denied the composer his proprietorship in these arrangements. It was otherwise with the tunes, but it is precisely here that Brahms showed his conscientious exactitude. By nature incapable of carelessness, much less of frivolity, he was not of those who will light a cigar at an everlasting altar lamp. But even when, as in this case, it was a question of less sacred things, he would never use, to retain the metaphor, any tinder but his own. He could not abstract as much as a match from others without drawing their attention to the fact.

He published the Hungarian Dances without an opus number, therefore not as a work of his own, and with the explicit indication that they were "arranged" by him. It was not his fault that the publisher afterwards took it upon himself to replace the word "arranged" on the title-page of the furiously successful pieces by the diplomatic and ambiguous "set for the piano." In fact he defended himself against this procedure in a rather scornful letter which he signed: "Yours set beside himself, J. Br." More than that, he enriched the collection by two or three pieces of his own without as much as mentioning the fact, and they are perhaps the finest of them all. This should have been enough to explode the whole affair from the outset, for Brahms could not have proceeded more meticulously honestly; but the dispute about the Hungarian Dances and the priority of their transcription continued for years, both openly and subterraneously, and occasionally revives even now.

The earliest of them Brahms had already noted in his youth at Hamburg. He had always been passionately fond of listening to the gipsies, and in Vienna he was among the most eager visitors to the *Csarda* in the Prater, where the musicians did the utmost honour to so famous a guest and played him their rousing improvisatorial tunes with an additional zest, until their fiddling set the strings groaning and breaking. Many of those national melodies he had noted down on his travels with Reményi, but he thought later that nothing of great profit to him had resulted. "Of Reményi," he said, "I could not learn this music rightly, for he brought too much untruth to bear upon it." There was a farcical sequel to the whole vexatious affair when Reményi finished by setting himself up as the loser. Here is his version:—

"I was in the habit of composing Hungarian melodies in the inns where we stayed, and Brahms saw some of them. In order to practise an innocent deception, I gave several of them the names of national songs without betraying their authorship." It was like him, and to crown his perfidious hypocrisy, he added that he could never play the dances again, because everyone would think that he, the true author of the tunes, was interpreting them wrongly, the public having grown accustomed to hearing them in Brahms's version. Thus we read in *The New York Herald*, where this sanctimonious comedian published his lament in 1879 without suspecting that the alleged offspring of his questionable Muse had long appeared in Hungarian folksong collections, or at least without imagining that he would be found out.

Roszavölgyi, the Budapest publisher of these originals, to whom Brahms had offered his transcriptions at a low fee and who refused them, is said to have torn his hair when he saw how they conquered the world—these children of the Pusztá booted and spurred—in the precious silken garb in which Brahms had clothed them. Simrock, who had been more astute, made an enormous fortune out of these slender books. Brahms had offered them to him as "perhaps the most practical article so unpractical a man as myself can supply" and as "genuine gipsy children, which I did not beget, but merely brought up with bread and milk," and he had asked, and received, 80 Friedrichsdor for each set, once and for all. It did not worry him in the least that the publisher might have built several castles from his profits, and he never said a word on the subject. To money he was more indifferent than to anything else in the world.

He had become a well-to-do man comparatively early, but he was so frugal that he found the proceeds from his conducting and piano playing fully sufficient. The continually increasing publishing fees he placed into the bank at a moderate interest. He wrote to Levi, whose brother had taken care of his money for a time and from whom he withdrew it because he "did not wish to have to think about it":—"I consider it neither stupid nor wrong if I do not seek to increase my capital by means of interest. It increases sufficiently in other ways." He rarely withdrew any considerable sum, and never unless he desired to use it for some

noble purpose. For his own use he never took out a large amount. He regarded himself, as it were, as the administrator of his goods, by which he had come, he felt, purely through fortunate circumstances, and he wished, after the death of his relatives, to restore them to the art to which he owed them and to its needy practitioners. In his last will, which was found to be invalid because the signature was missing and which called forth a series of tiresome lawsuits, he had made the "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde" in Vienna his residuary legatees. And I have already referred to the carelessly generous way in which he would assist his friends, and to his delicate manner of acting in such cases. Again and again he placed his cash at the disposal of people for whom he cared or whom he thought talented. Antonin Dvořák, whose vigorous and enviably abundant gifts he recognized as gladly as he was disturbed by his easy productivity and his unconcern with technical mastery, he not only furthered by his protection; he wished, so Dvořák related with tears in his eyes, to urge his whole fortune upon him.

Dvořák was one of the very few on whose behalf Brahms used his influence with complete conviction. There was scarcely another composer at that time whom he thought worthy of his recommendation. Perhaps the only one apart from Dvořák was Robert Fuchs, a refined and thoughtful composer of considerable freedom within his limitations, the creator of delightful and genuinely inspired Viennese Serenades, whom he valued highly and recommended urgently to Simrock. Otherwise he hardly knew what to do with his contemporary creative musicians, and it is remarkable that the performers he supported were for the most part mediocrities. For instance, he suggested the insignificant Richard von Perger for the post of conductor of the "Gesellschaft" concerts and even for that of director of the Conservatoire; but this may perhaps be regarded as an act of malicious revenge for past experiences and for his secret annoyance at not having been offered the direction of the Conservatoire himself. It looks as if he wished to intimate that the authorities would be safe from unpleasant surprises with so honest a man without genius and that they would have in him exactly what they deserved. But with other composers he was desperately unfortunate. He who was so tenaciously resolved to uproot, or at least

repress, the romantic in himself,—and in vain, for his inward songfulness remained stronger than his will,—could not but maintain a hostile attitude towards the creative followers of Wagner and Liszt. Nor is it difficult to understand that he could regard the revolutionary movements which occurred in the last years of his life with nothing but silent astonishment and perplexity. For Hugo Wolf he could not bring himself to care, though he could at most be amused, certainly not angered, by his criticisms in the *Wiener Salonblatt*—if these fulminant accesses of rage and enthusiasm may be so called—which attacked him in a manner that was not only excessively venomous but—one may fairly say it—extremely foolish. The youthful Richard Strauss he encouraged with some friendly advice after a performance at Meiningen of his F minor Symphony, in which, however, he could see little more than a remarkable command of form; already the first of the daring composer's symphonic poems seems to have outraged his feelings. Of Gustav Mahler, the scherzo in whose C minor Symphony he described as a piece of genius, he is reported to have said: "So far I was under the impression that Richard Strauss was the leader in the revolution, but I see now that Mahler is king of the insurgents."

It is clear that he was not more fortunate with his own followers of whom he had to endure far too many in his lifetime; their sterile worthiness which, to make matters worse, claimed his misunderstood ideal as its pattern, must have vexed him even more than the experiments of musical Jacobins. He endured tortures whenever he was condemned to listen to works by friends which did not appeal to him. He found it at all times difficult to utter a hearty word of approval, even when a work seemed to him to have succeeded; but he valued things according to standards for which very few were a match, and from his point of view rightly. He generally evaded the issue by one of those caustic jests with which he hurt far more than he would have done by gentle admonitions. To Hermann Levi he once wrote that there was such a thing as a seventh heaven for composers, "which, however, you will never enter." Having made a special journey to hear a performance of Schiller's *Lied von der Glocke* in a setting by his friend Bernhard Scholz, he nodded several times to himself in a way which the composer, who sat next to him, took

for a sign of approval. Scholz waited impatiently for a word from his friend, and this is what Brahms, grasping his hand warmly, said to him:—"It is really an indestructible poem, this *Glocke*!" During the performance of a very pleasurable comedy overture by a meritorious contemporary, Brahms turned to the composer, who eagerly awaited his verdict, and said innocently:—"Tell me, my dear friend, does composing actually amuse you?" He who was himself anxious to make no ado of his works, which he liked to refer to as trifles written for his amusement, forgot that smaller men, consciously or unconsciously aware of their distance from him, were the more susceptible to the opinion of one so eminent and clung anxiously to every word of praise from him. But this is precisely what he detested, as he did anything consequential, most of all any airs of importance or solemnity assumed before his own work. He once paid a visit to Hermann Goetz, whom he sincerely liked and admired and whose delicious comic opera, *The Taming of the Shrew*, he particularly liked for its clear, unspoilt cheerfulness. On a music stand he saw a few manuscript pages of a chamber work Goetz had just started. Wishing to look at them, he stretched out his hand to grasp them and said:—"I see you amuse yourself with this kind of thing too." But Goetz spread his hands over the sheets in alarm and said pathetically:—"This is the holiest I have!" Whereupon Brahms turned away irritated and cut his visit short. Another time, when Max Bruch, whom otherwise he appreciated, submitted a mile-long oratorio to him, he merely said with an expression of admiration:—"Tell me, where do you procure this beautiful music paper?" All this is far from delicate; perhaps it is cruel, but it proves his magnificent love of truth and a love of his art that would make no allowances. This is especially felt in his relations with Heinrich von Herzogenberg, which were painful to himself, for he liked him as a man. He no doubt regretted that when Herzogenberg made his beginning as a composer he had recommended him to his publisher, Rieter-Biedermann, for years later he thus complained about him:—"How gladly one would take pleasure in the enormous increase of his opus numbers; but it is not to be done, for, however one may overrate his industry, among other things, there is not one drop of blood!" It pained him the more that he could not

muster appreciation of one who in his own work out-Brahmsed Brahms and to whom he could not tell the truth in friendly candour, because whenever he wrote him a letter the figure of "a slender woman in blue velvet and with golden hair," seemed to look over his shoulder.

One of his numerous journeys, which frequently took him to various German cities for the purpose of conducting or attending first performances of his works, led him to revisit Leipzig, where a particularly assiduous cult of his music compensated him for the injustice once done there to his D minor Concerto. On this occasion his friendship with Elisabeth von Herzogenberg grew closer than ever before. The bonds of her happy marriage secured both her and him, and he could safely surrender himself to the melancholy delight of a passionless emotion. He may often have deplored afterwards that, at the moment he had felt the peace of his heart threatened, he had abruptly relinquished a pupil so rich in loveliness of soul and body, of whom Epstein had said that one must willy-nilly fall in love with her. She, who understood and interpreted his music as nobody else did, would have been the very companion for one so needy of affection, who had condemned himself to perpetual bachelorhood. Her picture, which stood on his writing table to the end of his life and watched him lovingly at his work, may in a silent communion have whispered many a word of gentle reproach and belated enlightenment. For she too, candid and cordial though she shows herself in her letters, was captivated. Her sisterly and reverent bearing towards the silent master, her confident devotion and sincere friendship cannot conceal that she had realized the reason for his reticence in those days in Vienna and that she sadly deplored it. It is true that she was greatly attached to her husband, for whose work she fought like a lioness; that she stood with outstretched arms in front of the simple and sensitive man to protect him from being hurt, especially by the spiky observations of Brahms, which stung him with redoubled sharpness; but she was too womanly and too good a musician not to see the difference between the two men and their work, and even in her hours of grief over her childlessness she knew herself at one with the friend who suffered the same deprivation. She may at such times have

imagined to herself what her life would have been, had she lived it at his side.

Between these three exceptional human beings a pure and fine relationship established itself, a relationship that was neither weak nor narrow. The trusting attitude of the husband, who loved and revered his wife without a shadow of suspicion is as admirable as the frank, playful and enthusiastic tone of the glorious woman and the sometimes clumsily chivalrous, sometimes ironically pleasant, and sometimes seriously attentive and sympathetic sentiments expressed by the master. The only comparable relationship is that between Wagner and Mathilde Wesendonck, which is unique, but did not remain so delicately unexpressed. It is immensely touching to find Brahms replying to a reproof from Elisabeth:—"You should surely know and believe that you are among the few people who are so dear to me that I cannot possibly tell you about it since your husband always reads and hears with you. However, he belongs himself to those few I have in mind." But on one occasion Brahms told her without any of his gloomily jesting circumlocutions how he felt and how deceptive his humorously playful composure was: this was in the two dark and stressful Rhapsodies for piano, Op. 79, which he dedicated to her and where he seems to pour out his heart's blood. In the second, the famous Rhapsody in G minor, the weighty, defiant principal theme seems to say, as if with clenched teeth:—"I love but thee, I love but thee, and yet may never tell thee!" And the first, with its wild onrush and its feverish spasms, has that profoundly emotional, appeased and yet aching interlude which says:—"Tell me naught, keep thy peace; let me bear our sorrow in silence." She thanked him effusively for the dedication, of which she was inordinately proud—"I feel like a small capitalist"—but she, who was wont to analyse all his works and to try to fathom their mood, who had in fact done so with these very pieces before they bore her name, contented herself with a message that was a mere handshake conveyed by letter. She understood and remained silent.

The thought of his fairest and most gifted pupil leads to that of Brahms as a teacher. As early in life as he could he ceased to give lessons, which were spoilt for him by many pianistic aspirants

of doubtful talent. Already in Hamburg he had said of them:—"One plays at least a little better than another, and some of them even worse." From the moment he was freed from material cares by his receipts from the publishers, he gave up teaching. Only to please Clara Schumann did he deputize for her later on in giving instruction to her daughter Eugenie and to an Englishwoman, Florence May. Both give lively descriptions of him and are agreed about his patience and conscientiousness, his original method of loosening the fingers and strengthening the arm and wrist. They also duly appreciate the object-lessons he gave them by frequently playing to them, but it was base ingratitude on the part of Florence May to let her particularly attractive and vivacious reminiscences be followed by a biography that is as flowery as it is perfunctory. Still, it may have enlisted followers for the master in her own country and thus deserve some indulgence.

There is no need to dwell long on Brahms's pedagogic activities. His principles as teacher and artist were the same; he was serious, inflexible and willing to serve only great music; he was an enemy to inaccuracy and negligence. His maxim was:—"Young people must not be spoilt." Those who wish to know his method of practising and finger training need only look at his extremely clever and instructive, most ingeniously combined and cruelly strenuous and difficult fifty-three technical exercises, which are as exhausting as they are exhaustive. He jestingly called them "melodious," probably to distinguish them from his other works, which seem to have been always stigmatized as unmelodious. Whoever has worked seriously at these studies for a year will either be able to play anything or else have sprained his hand for all time.

"Life robs us of more than death," Brahms used to say with a sigh whenever he lost a friend, either through some fateful event or through his own uncompromising frankness or hasty inconsiderateness. Nearly all who came into close touch with him were destined to experience some sort of estrangement, though he never entirely lost anyone, even where outward relations were broken off, for none could wholly part with him inwardly. But at the beginning of the 'eighties the irrevocable loss of his dearest companion threatened. A difference with Joseph Joachim, at

first repaired, was followed soon afterwards by a serious quarrel that led to a complete rupture between the two friends and the lasting severance of one of the most wonderful artists' bonds of all time. The first coolness has already been briefly referred to: Brahms had secretly hoped for a performance of his Requiem at the Schumann commemoration in Bonn, but, in his roundabout and taciturn way, had wrapped up the expression of this wish in so much deprecating modesty and confused hesitation, that the festival committee did not know where they were with him. Joachim could not—or would not—understand him, and the work remained unperformed. To Brahms's bitter remonstrances Joachim replied quite frankly, reproaching himself for having allowed his friendship to cool and yet contriving but half-heartedly to take a measure of blame upon himself. "Let us be perfectly open," he said. "I have been feeling, whenever we met during these last few years, that you were unable to find the old cordial tone with me, though I gladly allow that more than once you made perfectly polite attempts to do so. There may be a dozen reasons and I am far from saying that it was not my fault, at least partly. I am sure that I have disappointed many hopes you had of my development, that I may have appeared to you more indolent in many things than you liked, and that I was unnecessarily sparing of demonstrations of an assuredly genuine affection. Lord, what is there a man cannot accuse himself of, if he wishes to be honest? You stand in need of so much energy for your work that I quite understand that you do not always think it worth while to explain your feelings and that you prefer to let things go as they please." Brahms thanked him with a few sincere but laconic words and deferred a discussion until their forthcoming meeting at Bonn. There Clara Schumann and Hermann Levi acted as mediators and the cloud passed. Nevertheless, the old relations were not altogether resumed. And then it happened that Joachim sought a divorce. He accused the woman whom he had brought home so lovingly of adultery. Brahms was convinced that he was wrong, but Joachim showed himself so irritated and inaccessible that Brahms, who had once before smoothed a threatening quarrel between the two, chivalrously took the part of the deserted and grossly wronged woman. He even wrote her a letter in which he emphatically

vouched for her innocence and which was submitted to the court of justice, though without his knowledge, and decided the case in her favour. That Joachim could not forgive. There was a violent dispute, in the course of which Brahms offended him even more deeply by unreservedly maintaining his point of view and aggressively defending his friend's wife. Joachim completely severed his connexion with the companion of his youth. Two years later Brahms held out his hand towards a reconciliation, which was actually effected; but they never found the old cordial tone again. Tortuous addresses like "Honoured Master" or, even more bombastically, "Glorious Tone-poet" replaced the warm-hearted "Dearest Friend," and their letters became brief and painfully matter-of-fact. Joachim never ceased, even in times of resentment, to work with all his authority on behalf of the work by the "faithless friend," whom he continued to honour. In his opinion, which in a true artist of his stamp is not easily understood, musician and man were "two different things;" but he also said that "all differences notwithstanding, I cannot feel and perform this music otherwise than with my whole being. It has the effect of a natural force on me." It was therefore only to be expected that these two friends should find each other again, and that in course of time the intimacy of long ago should reawaken; but a thin layer of ice continued to cover their words. A bond had been torn which common memories and goodwill could tie again; but it never healed entirely.

The place of the friend from whom he was estranged was taken by another. Once again it was like the working of destiny that the right man should come into the master's life at the right moment, and it strikes one as the more remarkable because it was one who had long been known to him, had expectantly stood aside, and was now enabled by a special providence to blow fanfares on behalf of Brahms and to influence his future production decisively. The man was Hans von Bülow. He had been entrusted with the direction of the court orchestra at Meiningen, and his first act was to place himself and his artists at the master's disposal. No wonder that Brahms found an irresistible stimulus in the welcome possibility, not only to hear perfect performances of his works, rehearsed with unexampled care, but to try over each

new composition and so to consider each detail of orchestral sound. More than that:—in this orchestra, which was very soon to become world-famous under Bülow, there was a clarinet player of such extraordinary genius as Brahms had never yet encountered. When Richard Mühlfeld played, his love for the romantic instrument awakened, and the four fanciful and wonderfully intimate late works with clarinet are the rich fruit of the acquaintance with this incomparable and modest artist, whom Brahms used to introduce whimsically as “Fräulein von Mühlfeld, my prima donna.” The four works are the two Sonatas, the Trio, and above all the enrapturing Quintet, which is as if flooded with the last red twilight of an artist's evening.

The new friend resembled the old as fire resembles water, and in fact they hissed at each other with a will on occasion. Joachim, tall, thick-set, broad-chested, full of dignity in appearance and gait; Bülow, short, elegant, agile, a bundle of nerves, mordantly witty, sparkling with enthusiasm and malice, a restless little man with spare grey hair, a fine, clear forehead that could easily frown in anger, strikingly light, grey-blue eyes and a sarcastic mouth, the mocking expression of which was enhanced by a small moustache and a little dagger-like imperial. He bubbled over with vivacity and was not easy-going, either with himself or with others. His principle was that of Goethe:—“I am not here to please you, but to teach you something.” And in truth there was much to be learnt from this effervescent, wide-awake, unrelenting man, who was enthusiastic to the point of pedantry and for all his paradoxical nature consistent. He would run like a weasel up to the concert platform and then play or conduct like a demigod. In life as in art he was a gentleman from head to foot. “Emotion without thought is maudlin,” he would say, and he was never maudlin. Sentimentality was for him the attribute of sempstresses, and his passion was purified in the fire of intelligence. Temperament without exactitude in orchestral playing he called “slovenliness,” while exactitude without temperament he thought schoolmasterly dullness. What he wanted from an orchestra he showed in his performances, which created the ideal precedent for all later interpretations. Only now was it realized with what irresponsible and unconscious frivolity the works of the classics had been bungled in the past. The orchestral works of Beethoven

especially were only seen in their true majestic stature after the few performances by Wagner and the many by Hans von Bülow. "The word they shall leave untouched." * Every direction in the score was respected and nothing was disregarded. His alert modification of the tempo, his tidying up of mere traditional routine and his untiring zeal in realizing the composer's intentions down to the last insignificant detail, always with a magnificent care for the melody and its dominating line, resulted in interpretations such as had scarcely ever been experienced. They became the pattern and point of departure for the perception of style we know in the modern generation of conductors. That Bülow's labours of regeneration as pianist and conductor, which rehabilitated the composers' original intentions and insisted upon the real meaning of each work, at times assumed the character of a demonstration and that he deliberately exaggerated many things, was comprehensible even where he made the music sound too pointed and its effect seemed disturbingly premeditated. He was in the habit of turning to the audience when he came to passages he considered he was playing "correctly," that is to say, explicitly and in their logical relation to the whole, as if to say, "you see, that is how it should be done," and as if he wished to convince himself that he had been understood. He was an educator in the highest sense of the term of both players and public. The numerically small band of Meiningen—it consisted of barely fifty performers—was shaped by him into a supreme orchestra on which he played as on a single instrument and which was able at any time to perform the most important works of the repertory without a conductor and, if need were, without music. In order to secure more immediate understanding of a work that was still controvertible, a new symphony, for instance, he did not hesitate to repeat it at the same concert. In such cases he invariably had the satisfaction of seeing a work that was at first received with some reluctance loudly acclaimed at the second hearing that followed after a short interval.

It was especially the music of Brahms which he treated in this way, thus securing victory after victory for musical creations that were not easily accessible to their contemporaries and unfolded their wonders slowly. Brahms was almost entirely indebted to

* The author quotes Luther :—" *Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn.*"—E.B

this combative friend of his for the fact that he was recognized and admired as a symphonist in his own lifetime, not only by the small circle of the initiated, but by the whole of musical Germany. Bülow was ever ready to challenge death, the devil and criticism and, even in the concert room, to defend his convictions by speeches larded with defiance and invective as well as by musical performances. Once he even fought out a feud on the back of his warmly venerated Brahms—a broad back, fortunately. Ludwig Speidel, who was at that time music critic of the *Fremdenblatt* in Vienna, had commented unfavourably on Bülow's conception of the *Egmont* Overture. Bülow thereupon included the piece again in the programme of his next concert, ostensibly "by special request." But when the time came to start its performance, he turned to the audience and announced, after a few ironically polite words :—" Since we have been reproached with having sinned against the composer's spirit at our recent preformance of the *Egmont* Overture, I should not care to repay the consideration we strangers have enjoyed here with an offence against the *Fremdenblatt* by repeating the outrage. Please permit us, therefore, to play you instead the *Academic Festival Overture* by your master, Brahms." And when the audience, after a short pause of consternation, loudly insisted on a hearing of Beethoven's work, Bülow contemptuously flung this remark into the auditorium :—" In the year 1810 (the time of the composition of *Egmont*) the public would probably have preferred an overture by —Josef Weigl." Bülow was, of course, right in his scornful allusion to the desire of most people for what they have heard a hundred times before rather than for new and unknown music ; but Brahms was the loser in this unexpected and spontaneous attack on the part of his incensed apostle. However, he was capable of appreciating the conviction shown by this intrepid and faithful knight even when he committed a regrettable slip.

Three executive artists had the joy and the honour to hear the master exclaim that they had made him hear his music " for the first time," that is to say, as he had listened to it inwardly and imagined it in its perfect interpretation, but as he had never before actually enjoyed it through the ear. The ideal interpreter of his chamber music and his violin Concerto was Joachim, of the songs Alice Barbi; the third and most comprehensively active

was Hans von Bülow. It has already been related how the celebrated pianist was among the first to play a piece by Brahms in public and how his interest in a composer on whom he looked at first with some misgiving revived again and again. Even after the performance of the horn Trio at Zürich and after the friendly meeting at Baden-Baden, Bülow's sympathy with Brahms's efforts had long shown itself by fits and starts. But once he had come to know the tragic, storm-laden Symphony in C minor, the master's first, once he had been irresistibly seized by it, he had gone over to his camp with flying banners, and that time for good and all. Much disappointed, almost hopeless as he was, he had found a new mission that filled him entirely. He surrendered himself to its service with all the unconditional and passionate zeal that characterized him. He coined the somewhat too hasty word of "the tenth Symphony" and loudly proclaimed his belief in the evangel of the three great B.'s:—Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. When, after a year's extremely careful and fruitful study of a number of masterpieces, he undertook a tour with his orchestra, giving various German cities an example of how music should be made and proudly introducing his players as a model orchestra, each journey became a crusade the object of which was to preach the salvation of Brahms's music to the heathen.

Brahms himself would have been happy, even if no concert performance had followed, to be able to try over and retouch his works, and he was no less glad to have at last found a reliable and understanding advocate for his music, who saved him the trouble of travelling about as frequently as he used to do to "juggle" in this town or in that and to represent his works in person. His *alter ego* was capable of replacing him, spiritually quite according to his intentions and technically far better. Not that he had lost all desire to "gesticulate" on occasion. He particularly liked to direct the first performance of a new work, for he was then so profoundly moved that he was not sorry to be absorbed by the task of conducting while he could yet steep himself in the floods of his music. He accordingly made prompt use of an offer from Bülow to go to Meiningen and try over a work he had just completed and submitted to his friend Billroth as "a few little piano pieces." This was nothing less than his piano Concerto in B flat major, not only the longest so far written,

but the one which most completely solves the problem of embedding the sound of the keyboard instrument in that of the orchestra and at the same time preserving their contrasting qualities. It is one of those Rembrandt poems in *chiaroscuro*, filled with nature sounds and soul expressions that rose from the master's most secluded spiritual realm. It has a poetry that is not yet within a measurable distance of exercising its full sway over mankind. Once again we find a certain joyousness drawn from all the sorrows of the world which it has overcome and which yet remain hidden somewhere, deep under the surface. Once again he has saddled his steed for a ride into the old land of romance. At its very beginning the first movement leads into a comforting woodland twilight with a dialogue between horn and piano; the fantastic round of elemental spirits in the scherzo conjures up Böcklin's fabulous beings; in the *andante* a dreamer is stretched out on the moss, his slumber growing ever lighter (there is a forethought of the sad-sweet melody of the later song *); and old fairy-tales beckon † out of the airily glittering and delicately animated finale, where the white forms of red-haired forest witches seem to make their spectral appearance in a gracefully frolicsome dance which afterwards breaks into a demoniac boisterousness. Of displayed bravura there is not a trace: the soloist's vanity finds no satisfaction in this quite symphonically constructed work whose members are firmly grown together. It is one radiant whole that leaves no room for improvisatory exhibitions of virtuosity. Brahms several times played the work under Bülow, and Bülow under Brahms. Both masters could win no more than reverent admiration for a glorious work that is among the choicest, richest and best balanced the composer ever produced; they could not gain it the love that is its due. Its time will come, once the music of our own days has again become aware of art's dignity. Like all true and great things, it can wait.

It is curious to note, by the way, how regularly the law of serial evolution manifests itself in the work of Brahms. Compositions of the same category always follow each other, appearing at least in pairs, but generally in greater numbers. The three early piano Sonatas, which are not succeeded by any others, provide a

* *Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer.*

† The author quotes Heine :—" *Wie alte Märchen winkt es.*"—E.B.

case in point. Then come the two Serenades, and next the two piano Quartets. Afterwards we have the large choral works: the Requiem, the alto Rhapsody, *Rinaldo*, the *Song of Destiny* and the *Song of Triumph*. These have only two belated followers, the *Nänie*, a cypress-dark and marble-white funeral monument to all that is beautiful, written on the death of Anselm Feuerbach, and the grandiose and crepuscular *Gesang der Parzen*, suggestive rather of a song of the Norns, with its square-cut, old Teutonic themes. Next Brahms took charge of the orchestra: the Haydn Variations were his first attempt at symphonic instrumental creation after the Serenades, and then he poured forth the four Symphonies at short intervals. It is the same to the end of the way: the series of chamber works, especially the four with clarinet parts, followed by the three books of piano pieces and preceded by the three violin Sonatas. In between came, it is true, the succession of songs and smaller choral pieces, the violin Concerto and the Double Concerto for violin and cello; but even here is a visible or hidden relationship between separate works of the same kind. The whole catalogue is law-abiding.

The most salient of these works will have to be discussed in connexion with various phases of Brahms's life or problems of his work. A few episodes also remain to be related concerning the joint activities of the master and Bülow. Many services of devotion and many a caprice might be told of the incomparable conductor, whose nerves occasionally got the better of him, but who must be granted plenary indulgence. One who was capable of sacrificing himself so entirely, who, when commiserated with after a rehearsal for being at the end of his strength, promptly flashed in reply: "You ought to be ashamed to have any strength at all left after a rehearsal!" had a right to the fullest toleration of his weaknesses, which after all had their root in extraordinary and admirable qualities. Bülow, whose maxim it was that a conductor should not have his head in the score, but the score in his head, came to his rehearsals so well prepared that indeed he scarcely ever required a score. His amazing memory enabled him not only to learn the music by heart, but to interrupt the players with remarks such as: "Twelve bars before letter N, please, gentlemen!" or "Seven bars after the F major entry in the cellos!" And this was not a pose to impress the performers. Of this he had

no need whatever, and in any case orchestral musicians know in less than five minutes how they stand with a conductor and how much is merely an acrobat's charlatanry. He gave each moment of his life entirely to his cause, and is not to be estimated according to a blacksmith's measures.

It must be said here that the evil spirit that sought to disturb the relations between Brahms and nearly all his friends and standard-bearers was at work upon this friendship also. It seems almost like a jest of fate that it should have been through Brahms that Bülow left Meiningen and was thus most bitterly mortified by the very man whom he had served more unselfishly than anyone else. Brahms, of course, had not expected the evil consequences of his action, which was one of mere negligence that took no heed of another's susceptibilities. Yet—was it quite so inadvertent? It cannot be that Brahms grew tired of appeasing all the other conductors with whom he was in contact and who, with Ferdinand Hiller at their head, raised a general clamour because Brahms was seen to challenge the world arm in arm with, and to entrust his music before all others to, the "impostor," the "accursed defiler of tradition," the "vain gradation-hunter,"—and whatever all the amiabilities were with which the tribe of time-beaters endowed him. Nor is it thinkable that he wished to give Bülow a lesson for planning to repeat the fourth Symphony at Frankfort a few weeks after a performance there under Brahms himself; for Bülow had obtained the composer's definite sanction, in order to demonstrate—as his letters to his wife show—how much clearer, livelier and more impressive the work would sound under his baton than under the clumsier direction of its creator. But Brahms did allow himself to be persuaded by the anti-Bülow clique to conduct the work a second time, which made it impossible for Bülow to perform it at his own concert immediately afterwards and to fight out the contest he had secretly hoped for, a contest in which Brahms would certainly have been defeated as conductor, even though he would have given some things in which Bülow, for all his genius, was lacking:—romance, warmth, a beating heart.

Bülow regarded Brahms's conduct as an affront such as Brahms undoubtedly never intended. He felt that his authority had been called in question and asked the Duke of Meiningen by telegram

to be at once relieved of his duties. His resignation was so vehemently worded that it was immediately accepted. The discord between the deeply offended conductor, whose nervous condition tended to exaggerate the whole case morbidly, and the all too inconsiderate Brahms was not resolved when the master, who became doubly maladroit whenever he felt himself in the wrong, wrote what was intended to be a letter of reconciliation in which, in his somewhat negligent manner of expression, he took matters far too lightly. "Concerts," he said, "and all that belongs to them once and for all do not count seriously with me, and I find it difficult to think of last winter's concerts as anything but a diversion and otherwise than cursorily." This could not but annoy Bülow afresh, for he rightly regarded his concerts as the most serious things in his life, especially those devoted to the service of Brahms's music. His answer was irascible:—"If *tant bien que mal* I make propaganda to convince people of the glory of your music, it is not done, Heaven knows, with the irreverent object of offering you a diversion. I do it solely to divert myself, —and if it vexes others, well, that is part of the business. *Anch'io son, not pittore, but egoista.* However, each one as he pleases." That was a well-aimed and vigorously applied slap in the face, and Brahms had to accept it, for he knew that it was not altogether undeserved.

It was Brahms, therefore, who took the first step towards a reconciliation when his resentful friend visited Vienna two years later, in the winter of 1887, and played his wonderful complete cycle of Beethoven's piano Sonatas, which still clings vividly to my memory for its crystal clarity and grand style, technically transcendent though sometimes over-intellectual and over-pointed in manner. A visiting card from the master, bearing only the notes of Pamina's "Shall I then see thee nevermore?"* had sufficed to lead Bülow, who had felt the estrangement keenly, back into the open arms of his repentant friend. He then continued his labour of love on behalf of Brahms in Berlin and on all his tours, and though there were times when enthusiasm for some too frequently performed works became somewhat blunted, he acknowledged himself again and again as an adherent to this music. His ardour never cooled and he remained faithful to his death.

* *Magic Flute*, opening of the trio, No. 19.—E.B.

There was something else that Brahms owed to Bülow, though indirectly :—his acquaintance with the ducal pair of Meiningen, whose unprejudiced, cordial and art-loving disposition he valued highly, the more so because he had scarcely ever before met with such qualities in exalted circles. The Duke Georg II. was one of the most gifted lovers of the theatre. In conjunction with his consort, who had been an actress named Ellen Franz and whom he had raised to the rank of a Lady of Heldburg, he set on his private stage the example for an entirely new and admirably finished art, from which every theatre long afterwards profited and which even to-day is amusingly apparent in some expressionist distortions. They were no less intent on an exemplary cultivation of music, and Brahms was an especial favourite with this ducal Maecenas and his wife. He paid them very frequent visits, though he would never have done so, had they not expressly absolved him from any kind of etiquette, including that of wearing dress clothes. Only at the court table did he appear in evening dress, and it amused him to wear the whole proud array of his decorations. The intercourse was absolutely unconstrained and spirited. Brahms gladly assumed the part of the giver and was ready to offer as much of his music as such hearers desired. It gave him particular pleasure to introduce his friend Widmann at the castle of Meiningen and it was with high glee that he watched the inflexible republican with his Swiss ideas of freedom in contact with these princely personages and to see how frankly and tactfully his friend moved on this unaccustomed ground without ever giving himself away and without doing his principles the least violence. Among the fairest and serenest days of his life were those spent at the Duke's dream-like villa "Carlotta" on Lake Como. Rudolf von der Leyen, who was once privileged to be his companion there, tells us in his reminiscences how easy was the intercourse, based on mutual respect, between these three people. It is as if the sounds of his *Nänie* had come to life, if we imagine Brahms in the gardens of this dazzling white house on the banks of a deep-blue lake that reflects the radiant snowy peaks of dull-green mountains: clad in his woollen shirt, his mighty Rübezahl* head pensively inclined, under palms and pines, amid blazing red azaleas, amethyst and scarlet rhododendrons,

* A shaggy and rather uncouth mountain spirit, hero of German legend.—E.B.

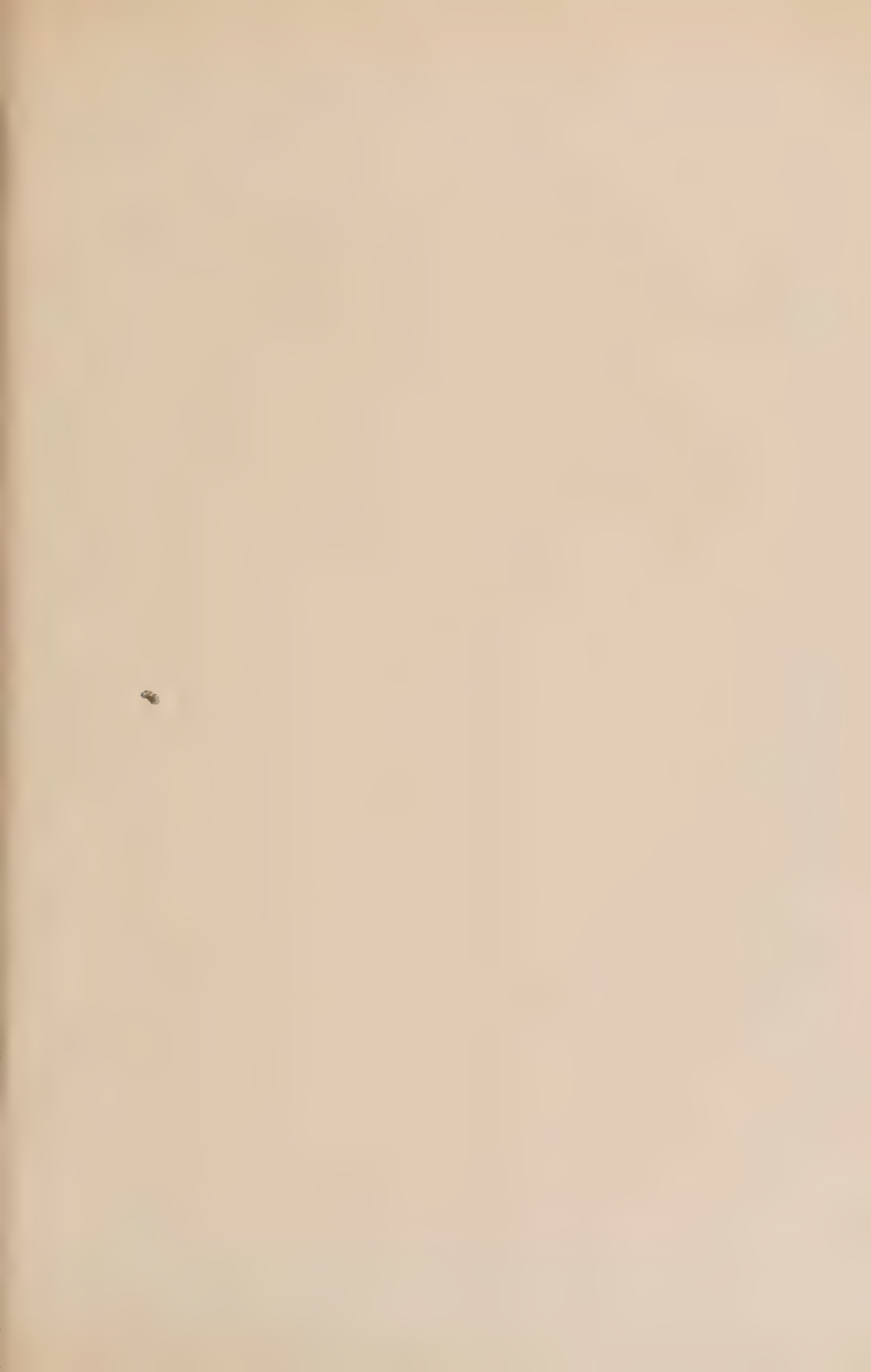
crimson rose-trees peeping through the black-green of cypresses and creeping round marble statues, vivid in the fierce light. Brahms in the midst of all this, looking himself like some mythical demigod, breathing deeply a sun-heated, tremulous air, listening to inner voices in an intoxication of dreams, a dweller on halcyon isles; or traversing the waves of the lake, swimming and snorting like a Triton by Böcklin: this is the master's image one would like to retain, this and not the heart-rending, dreadfully ravaged figure which dragged itself painfully through existence.

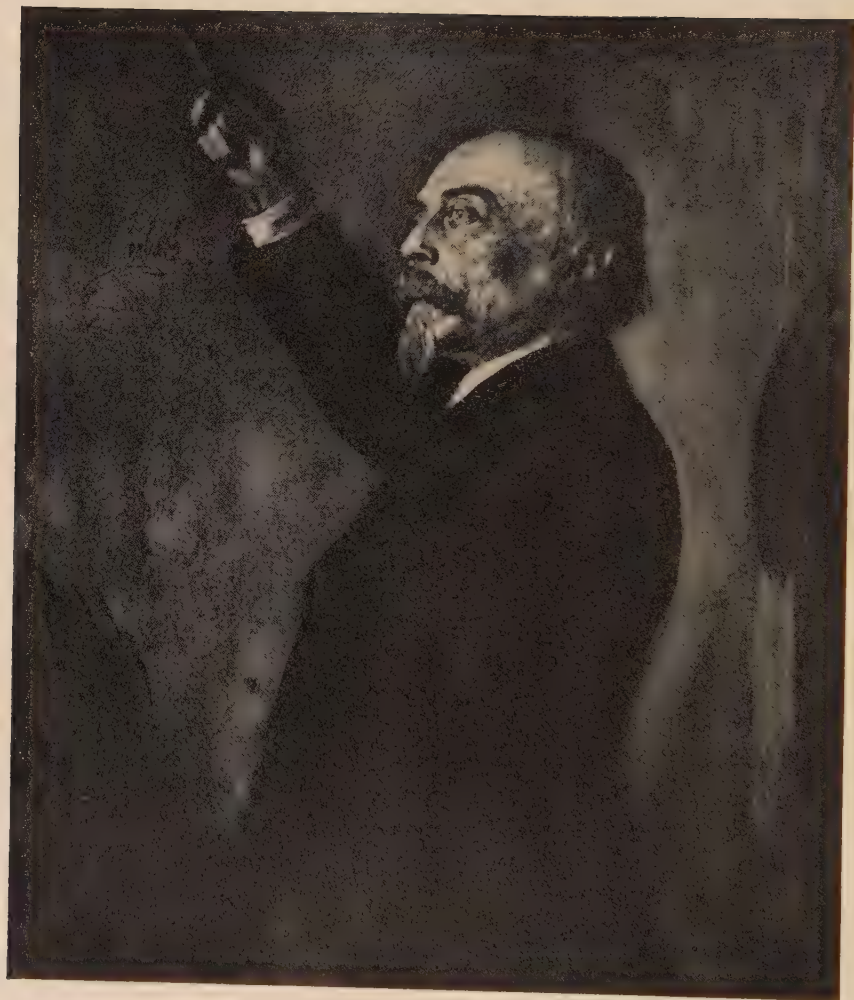
In Italy he was as happy as a child. He visited the land of the sun eight times and each time returned enriched. He hardly cared at all to which part of the country he went; the luxuries of elegant hotels and the swarms of snobbish Britishers and Berliners alone had to be avoided at all costs. He was much more at home in the modest *alberghi* and *osterie*, and took pleasure in the chatter of the intelligent, life-loving and courteous people, who instinctively respected this imposing stranger without being aware of his name and significance (though it was remarkable that many of these simple people did know him). The greatest experience and lasting object of his desire was Taormina, with the smoking Etna on one side, as if painted on a wing by a scenic artist, and the shattered columns of a Greek theatre on the other, where his glance rested on the cornflower-blue sea and the unbelievably abundant garlands of flowers that fall over the high cliffs. Sicily—Girgenti, Syracuse, Palermo and the dark-golden stone dream of Monreale—may be imagined in the tonal image of his fourth Symphony and of more than one piano piece. Elsewhere too, in Rome, Verona, Florence, Siena or Bergamo he wandered with the utmost enjoyment; the dark beauty of the girls enchanted him and he had not the least objection to Cyprian wine and *Lacrimae Christi*. Only one regret he expressed during railway journeys reluctantly endured:—"One really ought to roam through all this on foot."

His friends were astonished. They hardly knew him in this unbuttoned mood. The habitual recluse would not here enjoy himself alone, and that not only because he was as little conversant with the vernacular as with any other foreign language, for he knew enough to make himself approximately understood; what

he desired was to let others share in his pleasure and to increase it by their delight. Not that it was easy or comfortable to travel with one so indefatigable and so intent on exhausting the gifts of each hour, one who tyrannically forbade any protest and demanded complete subordination to his programme. His receptivity and hustling eagerness began to show themselves in the small hours of the morning. "He was," one of the company lamented, "like an adorable elephant bearing down upon us."

The most agreeable companion, as I have already said, he found in Josef Victor Widmann, who knew best how to deal with his singularities without spoiling his good humour. Already in the early spring Brahms would begin to entice him gently: "If you, my dear friend, really possess liberal views and principles, you may easily imagine how much money I can save and set aside for a journey in Italy, if I neither marry nor buy myself an opera libretto before the summer! Could we not travel together on this amount? In Italy I cannot well get on alone." When Widmann, who needless to say had intentionally failed to understand the master's tentative offer to come as his guest, had a bad accident in Italy, Brahms touchingly proved himself the truest of friends in his growling manner. Widmann had fallen head foremost into the luggage well of a steamer and escaped certain death only by catching his foot in a chain; but the foot had been fractured in two places and Widmann was forced to interrupt the journey. Brahms was not to be persuaded to continue it, but sent the other companions on ahead and spent his sixtieth birthday at the sick-bed of his friend, whose pain he felt far more acutely than the patient himself. Of course he concealed it under a noisy cheerfulness and an exaggeratedly merry bustling up and down the sickroom. "I cannot describe," says Widmann in his reminiscences of those bright Italian days, "how circumspect, self-sacrificing and cordial Brahms was at my sick-bed. The manipulations of the doctor, little pain though they gave me, agitated him dreadfully, which he sought to hide from me by pleasantries, uttering through fiercely clenched teeth:-- 'When it comes to carving, I am the man; I was always Billroth's assistant on such occasions.' Whenever we were alone, he looked after my comfort like a nurse." Selfish, rude, uncouth Brahms!





HANS VON BÜLOW
Portrait by Lenbach

His inward unrest and the constraint of concealing it under a downright roughness, an apparently merry bachelor humour or a moody bluntness, and then again under an immensely delicate considerateness, until all the feelings he had amassed would suddenly discharge themselves in the return of one of those accesses of indiscretion or sudden withdrawal—all this left him in Italy, and he was a glad human being in the midst of others. Though he once endeavoured to excuse his tactless, unseemly and clumsy behaviour to Siegfried Ochs: “Where should I have learnt tact? In my youth I was obliged to play in sailors’ taverns to keep alive, and there one learns no good manners,” this psychological explanation need not be taken too seriously, for nobody could be more inventive in devising proofs of affection or more sensitive where the heart was concerned. All that was offensive in his nature was surely due to the discord in his soul and his conscience and not to the shortcomings of his upbringing, although even Billroth took exception to the latter, having found occasion to complain of disaffection and rudeness. Brahms educated himself much too resolutely not to persist in his hard discipline when it came to such matters of outward behaviour. The man who, in Italy and elsewhere, took off his boots on returning to his inn late at night and crept upstairs in his stockings lest he should wake the tired servants, who even in a smoking compartment never lighted one of his passionately desired cigars without asking the permission of ladies who might be present, who in Catholic churches forswore his Protestantism by taking holy water and making the sign of the cross, not to offend the believers—that man did not learn all this in the sailors’ haunts of Hamburg. He possessed by instinct the true measure of all that is becoming. If he often failed to comport himself accordingly, it may have been from a distaste for any sort of servility. No doubt he sometimes made a kind of trial of strength to discover how much people would submit to, and he was delighted if anyone paid him back in his own coin. If, on the other hand, his abuse was pocketed, perhaps with a submissive smile, he was so roused to scorn and contempt that his insults became summary and assumed the character of a sport. He was actually capable once of leaving a party with the words:—“I beg a thousand pardons if there should be anyone here whom I have not insulted

to-night!" That might have been an ironic comment on the susceptibility of others and on their misunderstanding of his true nature, but his apparently insolent and aggressive freedom of speech was in general simply due to something stronger than himself, to a tortured soul which he was not willing to discover to others and could only appease and for awhile forget in his work, among children or with the unspoilt, trusting peasantry of Italy, where he drank in the world's beauty.

On February 13, 1883, Richard Wagner died. Brahms was among the first to lay a laurel wreath on the great master's grave. To his grief this action, like many others, was taken amiss and even interpreted as mockery. He was beside himself at being thus misunderstood and accused of such gross baseness. He never uttered a disrespectful word against Wagner, not even on being openly or covertly dealt one of the many spiteful injuries by the pugnacious reformer of the German music drama, who was often so deluded by his own vehemence as to aim right and left blindly and to hit the wrong person. Wagner's attacks are among the ugliest and most perfidious things he ever wrote and are only to be accounted for by his almost pathological hatred of the "bigoted" musical opposition, which he sought to strike in the man he fancied to be its head—a hatred hardly understandable in one who was so aware of his own towering greatness. He never succeeded in injuring that head in any way. Brahms persistently kept silent, and it was perhaps another reason for Wagner's rage that he calmly went on his way, oblivious of all the battle-cries, creating one work after another, each one more momentous than the last, obedient to his own laws alone and disdainful of meretricious effect. Brahms must have known well enough that his great antagonist could hardly deem the "wooden Johannes" as insignificant as he pretended; else he would not have aimed at him again and again. Nonentities are disposed of with a single contemptuous gesture, as Wotan disposes of Hunding; only a strong adversary is repeatedly attacked—and, by implication, assured of a secret respect.

One to whom the Bayreuth master was wholly indifferent would never have been the cause of his rupture with Nietzsche, whose attachment was one of his proudest conquests and who was

his most dazzlingly eloquent and intellectually audacious apologist. All the others were poor chatterers compared with this ingenious transvaluator of all values. The more convincing is the supposition that Brahms was not regarded by Wagner as the "impotence" he liked so scornfully to call him. Nothing but a reluctant admiration that must have lain under his aversion can have led to such an incident as that related by Wilhelm Kienzl in his reminiscences. Kienzl quotes Wagner's own words: "Nietzsche had once again come to Bayreuth to see me," the master relates. "He stayed at the 'Golden Anchor.' When I entered his room at the hotel I saw a suspicious-looking little red book, some songlet of triumph or of destiny by Brahms, with which he made ready to attack me. But I was not going to have any of it. Towards evening the Professor came to Wahnfried and behold, he had the accursed red book under his arm. He now had a mind to put it on the piano desk and to play it to me in all seriousness. He thought that I ought to know this work to appreciate this composer as he deserved. I declined; he would not cease to urge me. At last I became violent—you know what I am like when I get angry, and what my dear Cosima has had to put up with from me! I was rude and—Heaven knows how—Nietzsche was kicked out. Well, I am like that! And he never came back! And now, you see, I am to be fond of Brahms through whom I lost my Nietzsche! Do you understand now?" One can only reply:—No, most honoured master, such heavenly logic we cannot understand, for if you had not already hated Brahms, the whole scene could never have occurred. What one does understand, however, is that anyone towards whom one feels nothing but indifference could not possibly provoke such furious resistance.

It is not a little surprising that Nietzsche's "true" opinion of Brahms was formulated so differently, in his clever and malicious book, *The Case of Wagner*, from what was to be expected after his course of action at Wahnfried. His criticism of "the melancholy of impotence," already cited, another of "the musician who had no wealth of inspiration but only thirsts after such wealth," and others equally characterized by sparkling sophistry and brilliantly aphoristic half-truths, are, to be sure, in curious contrast with his energetic defence of the master, though he must

have already been inwardly alienated from Wagner, who was the great experience of his life, to part with him for such a reason. Nietzsche's fanatical love of truth, which did not let him spare even himself, was far too great to leave room for the supposition that injured vanity might have been the cause of his change of front. He had sent one of his books and a choral work, *Hymnus an das Leben*, to Brahms, and the master, who held the sceptical view of Nietzsche's writings that "the opposite may be equally true," had answered him only by a visiting card on which he thanked him for the book without any reference to the insignificant and inflated composition. Nietzsche, who thought perhaps more of his music than of his audacious, astounding and often paradoxical philosophy that revised all concepts and shone with glorious language, must have been far more offended by this silent criticism than he would have been by expert censure or a mere difference of taste. At any rate, he continued to hold Bülow in esteem when the latter quite angrily disparaged the same work. This was certainly not the reason for his abjuration of Brahms, which was after all less astonishing than his turning from Wagner, least of all in a man to whom the world with its human beings and its morality was lost, and who was himself lost to that world in the end.

With Wagner himself Brahms came into contact but once again, and that only through a correspondence that caused some vexation. Peter Cornelius had received from Tausig the manuscript of the Venusberg scene in *Tannhäuser* with its magnificently unrestrained bacchanal and had given it to Brahms, whom he knew as a collector, not merely of autographs as such, but of manuscripts containing valuable music. Brahms possessed such treasures as Mozart's G minor Symphony, the *Ländler* and several songs by Schubert, Quartets by Haydn and sketches by Beethoven. Wagner's own autograph of a scene connected with one of the most agitated phases of his feverish existence was to take its worthy place among these. But when Wagner heard how the score had changed hands, he requested Brahms indirectly to return it to him, since neither Cornelius nor Tausig, to whom it had been lent, were entitled to pass it on, and he claimed it as a keepsake for his son. Brahms, who had an uncomfortable feeling that he was regarded as a particularly undesirable owner of this

manuscript, at first refused to part with it. But when Wagner wrote personally, in a tone of self-sufficient civility which suggested a suspicion that Brahms declined to give up an unlawful possession, the latter, feeling his honour called in question, at once returned the score with a polite but frank and manly letter to the Bayreuth master, who, he said, was "not an easy man to deal with." He did not omit to point out that his compliance was a voluntary favour and that he yielded to Wagner's wish, not to any legal claim. Wagner thanked him, this time very politely, and sent him as a substitute for the score he had wrested from him the expensively bound *édition de luxe* of the *Rhinegold* score. It bore a friendly, if reserved, dedication and an intentional allusion to the logical thematic workmanship in this work, of which, Wagner said, Brahms too was capable. It was a new proof of his secret esteem of one he had so often abused and whose good opinion seems after all to have mattered a great deal to him—at any rate more than might have been supposed from his official attitude towards him. Brahms acknowledged the gift and the accompanying message by a very deferential letter, in which he laid stress on his admiration for the opposing monarch's great works. Thus the conflict was settled; but in spite of this conciliatory conclusion to an exchange of notes between two sovereigns of art, neither Wagner nor his adherents refrained from continuing to pour the vial of their scorn over the "eunuch of music," as the *Bayreuther Blätter* called Brahms.

The sin of omission which Brahms committed in not paying homage to Wagner as one greater than himself, and the error of imagining that he had gauged his importance more accurately than anyone else, is humanly both understandable and pardonable. At times it may have disturbed his conscience and caused him inward anxiety. His view of Wagner, variously as it expressed itself in the course of years, was doubtless fundamentally a mixture of admiration and aversion. Inadmissible as it was for his panegyrists to set him up as witness for their blind hatred of Wagner, it is not more fitting to represent him as a convinced Wagnerian in virtue of a few passages in his letters and some verbal utterances. The expression of "the best of the Wagnerians," which he used to Wagner himself and which I heard more than once from his own lips, can surely be interpreted only in the

sense that he attributed to himself a profounder understanding of Wagner's scores than that shown by any other musician of his time, since none could in any way measure himself with him. In a conversation I had with him in the year of his death, he openly discussed his views of the disputable composers of his time, especially Wagner and Bruckner. The latter's devout faith struck him as priest-ridden bigotry and he rated his vast symphonic structures as the amateurish, confused and illogical abortions of a crafty rustic schoolmaster. To their inward inevitability, different from his own, and even to the wondrously rich and ecstatically devotional adagios of Bruckner, he could, with the best will in the world, gain no access. But had he the best will? What he said to me, approximately, was this:—"Bruckner? That is a swindle which will be forgotten a year or two after my death. Take it as you will, Bruckner owes his fame solely to me, and but for me nobody would have cared a brass farthing for him. Of course I had nothing to do with it; in fact it happened very much against my will. Nietzsche once declared that I had become famous through a mere chance, because the anti-Wagner party required me as an anti-pope. That is nonsense, for I am not the man to be placed at the head of any party whatsoever. I must go my way alone and in peace, and I never crossed that of others." (I did not at the time dare to ask the sick master:—What of the manifesto?) "But in Bruckner's case it was so. That is to say, after Wagner's death his party naturally had need of another pope, and they managed to find no better one than Bruckner. Do you really believe that anyone in this immature crowd has the least notion what these symphonic boa-constrictors are about? And do you not think that I am the musician who knows and understands Wagner's works best to-day, certainly better than any of his so-called followers, who would like nothing better than to poison me? I once told Wagner himself that I was the best Wagnerian of our time. Do you take me to be too dull to have been as enchanted as anyone by the joyousness and sublimity of the *Mastersingers*? Or dishonest enough to conceal my view that I consider a few bars of this work as of more value than all the operas that have been written since? I an anti-pope? It is too silly! And Bruckner's works immortal and 'symphonies'? It is ludicrous!"

Much might be said about this. Above all, that the conviction of his superior understanding may after all have been based upon a false conclusion. For Brahms saw Wagner from the point of view of an "absolute" musician. It clearly follows that Wagner could not be a good musician in Brahms's eyes, since he did not order and develop his thematic material solely according to the logical exigencies of formal construction. But Wagner was different, and more than a mere "good musician": he was the dramatist of genius, whose music was conditioned, far more than in the case of any of his precursors, by the demands of the stage and the dramatic action. Needless to say, Brahms knew this as well as anyone; but it is not difficult to understand that Wagner's whole procedure, diametrically opposed to his own principles, was artistically antipathetic to him. He had fought his way through to a very different goal. Wagner's invention he admired in detail, though it may seem strange and almost like bad faith that he should once have designated *The Flying Dutchman* as Wagner's best work. The immense energy and greatness of the whole artistic figure he respected even more, as the following famous passage in a polemical letter to Widmann proves:—"If the Bayreuth theatre stood in France, there would be no need of anything so great as the Wagnerian work to induce you and Wendt and all the world to go there on a pilgrimage and to become enthusiastic over such ideal conception and creation." And he is reported to have said to Anton Door:—"Wagner now comes first and after him there is nobody within measurable distance. Everything else disappears for the moment before his significance, which will not easily be understood and appreciated as it is by me—the Wagnerians least of all."

What is curious is the fact that the *Mastersingers*, which afterwards clearly meant so much more to him, at first displeased him. "I am not enraptured, either by this work or by anything of Wagner's," he wrote to Clara Schumann. On the other hand, *The Valkyrie* at once made a strong impression on him, unlike *Siegfried*, which should have meant much to him of all people, at least in the forging scene and in that of Brünnhilde's awakening. The drama he thought most disagreeable was *Tristan*, perhaps only because he may have stood shudderingly and regretfully before a work that showed him whither he might himself have

gone, had he yielded unresistingly to the magic of romantic and erotic intoxications instead of incarcerating the hotly urging febrile voices in the prison of form by an effort of his pitiless will-power and sometimes, as in the gothically severe and cold Motets, by an act of violent self-denial—a prison from which, it is true, they would escape again and again, in despite of him, and perhaps to his secret, melancholy joy. This is clearly seen in his Symphonies, which dominate the last decade but one of his life. They signify at once fulfilment and self-control and show him in his entire greatness. His permanence, however, and all that is compellingly lovable and true in him, rests elsewhere:—in his vocal works and his chamber music. And that grew ever more pure, more abundant and more masterly.

XVI

THE SYMPHONIST AND HIS PROBLEMS

BEFORE Johannes Brahms published his first string Quartets, he had composed some twenty works in that form,—composed and destroyed. And before he came forward with his tragically wrestling first Symphony, a series of other symphonic works had preceded it and had been rejected by him. “A symphony is no joke,” he would say. He was aware of what it meant to undertake a work of this kind after Beethoven and wished to prove that Wagner was wrong when he maintained that the masterthrow of the “Ninth” excluded a serious and fruitful succession of the species and had exhausted all its possibilities. He wanted to be armed, and armed he was.

But ere he set out on his conquest, he sent up a signal :—the orchestral Variations on a theme by Haydn,—the so-called St. Anthony chorale. They were all the rage at the time and carried the name of Brahms as instrumental composer from country to country; but to-day this charming work, kept in pastel shades and delicate contrasts almost throughout, does not mean quite so much for us. Brahms’s manner of elaborating his theme resembles that in the Handel and Paganini Variations without being quite so rich and manifold. After the greatness and novelty of the gigantic final *passacaglia* in the fourth Symphony, the Haydn Variations look like a child beside a man to whom it bears a certain likeness. In the matter of sound even, an impression of tentative experimenting is not to be escaped. Brahms seems to have taken to heart the warning of the bluntly confidential Bernhard Scholz :—“My dear friend, only score nicely and lightly, not too thickly, whatever you do,” for his orchestration is so light here as to seem almost shabby in places, not to say like a barrel organ. This is especially true of the opening: afterwards the tone colour becomes fuller and more saturated. Elsewhere there

are moments of exquisitely tender sound, as for example the gently swinging *siciliana* of the seventh variation that is set off very happily against the snappy preceding one, which develops from an empty beginning into a lively, nervous energy. The finale fails to attain to the obviously intended force and dignity until the last thirty or forty bars.

Brahms succeeds in a masterly manner in dispelling the monotony which the five-bar periodicity of Haydn's theme threatened, either by means of diverse rhythms or by its conversion into even groupings. But for all the irreproachable balance of form and for all the engaging details, one is conscious only of the master's hand and asks in vain where his soul may have been while he laboured at works of this kind. This composition, and many another where Brahms seems to lock the gay-feathered singing bird of his fancy into the cage of a deliberately chosen classical form, where he seems to stint his otherwise so recklessly lavished treasures and to endeavour to make the most of as little material as possible, makes one realize how right Gustav Mahler was when he said:—"I have no use for a composer who worries over a wretched little theme, varying it and treating it fugally in his necessity to economize with it, Heaven knows how long, so as to make it last throughout a whole movement. I cannot endure systematic parsimony. There must be abundance and a continuous flow if music is to be any good." So it is with the chamber music with piano, the two Concertos and several choral works and symphonic movements by the inspired Brahms, who sometimes simply cannot save himself from his own riches and whose music thus frequently becomes congealed into a kind of strange frosty greatness—the sweat of painful labour turned to ice. This is by no means true of the Haydn Variations, where he tried out and subjected to his needs the medium of the full symphony orchestra. They would no doubt strike us as less distant and more weighty, were it not for the C minor Symphony.

Brahms's Symphonies do not take the same place in the totality of his work as those by other great instrumental composers. With Beethoven the Symphonies are the high ranges whose mightily towering summits look down upon everything else and lead to the greatest height that projects right into Heaven, the *Missa*

solemnis, from whence hardly a sound reaches mankind, for it is addressed to the Godhead: else only the last Quartets and Sonatas can bear us up to those regions on their wings of sound, if we listen with all our hearts. With Brahms it is otherwise. His Symphonies lead us away from the peaks of the *German Requiem* and the *Song of Destiny*, away from the shudders of judgment, the secrets of the other world, the consoling promises of a devoutly pagan, austere and steadfast humanity, to the tragedies and comedies of life, to peaceful countries, to the expression of the reason and the controlled force of a man who has found himself without having wandered in deserts, who, alone among many, yet has no need to hide from the world, who bears and conceals his ills without defiance or resentment, who has formed himself by hard renunciations, who can give without giving himself away and seems but rarely a prey to the fear of wasting himself. Here is one who has conquered and secured his own inward realm and no longer comes into conflict with the realm without, who does not build upon pathless ridges whence no wanderer returns the way he went, who erects his high towers in the midst of all the people as temples for those whose minds and souls are free. This is how Brahms's Symphonies may well strike one—as the immense effort of a will to be monumental. They are indeed monuments of a conscious and successful mastery that hides many riddles of a bleeding soul, many signs of secret joys and sorrows, many tell-tale symbols of suppressed dreams under a proud, bold unity of form gained by irresistible, but too often forced energy. Much lies concealed among the cool shadows of these formal arches and cloisters.

Perhaps this is the reason why these works, at least the four which Brahms expressly designated as Symphonies, do not truly represent him in his whole output. So it seems, at any rate, to those who have discovered their Brahms for themselves, the Brahms who has nothing to do with the "heir" and the "classic," the guardian of inherited treasures, who can strike us as cool, cautious, even abstract whenever his deliberate masterly severity enclosed within the monastic walls of his formal edifices the blossoming life, the rustling and whispering voices, the fantastic glowing and gleaming of his music. A kind of tormented energy makes itself felt in a certain crabbedness here and there, though

this very effort, again, is capable of bringing to light deeply hidden and unexpected treasures, for the content could only be the product of truth and experience, and never merely incidental. Brahms could do all things save one: the art of lying was not given to him, either in speech or in music. The impression that one is listening to theoretical abstractions has sometimes to be overcome in these Symphonies, or rather, in some of their movements, for several among them speak so wondrous a tongue and are so large and free that they can compare only with the greatest things in Brahms's music. It would therefore be unjust to speak here of his symphonic work as a whole, and each individual work must be judged with discrimination. Nearly all the middle movements sound like orchestrated chamber music. They express the intimate Brahms who captivates everyone: his transfigured sorrow, his spiritualized grace and serenity, his happy and reticently hearty enthusiasm. Or again they display a placid landscape wrapped in fragrant blossoms, enlivened by the gentle plashing of fountains under broad lime trees, bright with a warm sunlight that is but now and then veiled by light clouds. Very seldom, even in the first and last movements, is there a cosmic feeling, a liberating mood or sound of nature, often though this be the composer's problem of expression in other works. It must be said that these middle movements, whether they enchant and move us by a bucolic comeliness, by a smiling melancholy, by a furtive, spectral grace or by a blunt, scolding briskness, are not really symphonic because we seldom discover any ideal connexion—there is a thematic connexion here and there—between them and the movements which frame them, and because they are by nature enlarged miniatures rather than big structures orchestrally imagined from the beginning. They are, I repeat, chamber rather than orchestral music, in spite of much that is magical in their instrumental colour. They could equally well have had their place in the master's Quartets, Trios or Sextets, which we treasure for their fullness and sweetness. More than that, there are adagios and scherzos in the chamber music more symphonically developed and more orchestrally conceived in their gorgeousness of sound. I speak, be it understood, of the four Symphonies, in C minor, D major, F major and E minor, the works to which I referred just now as those expressly

designated as Symphonies by Brahms; for there are works of his which come much nearer the ideal of the Brahmsian symphony than the second and third of the above. This is true especially of that tale of eternal youth, the piano Concerto in D minor, and no less so of that story of the lonely and resigned man, the piano Concerto in B flat major. And one is almost tempted to say the same of the F minor piano Quintet.

It was a strange path which the master trod between the early works and the later, more clearly shaped compositions we owe to a superior but colder art,—a path that can be explained only by a knowledge of his personal experiences. It is not easy to understand his fear of losing himself, which shows itself chiefly in an increasingly austere repression of every rebellious thought, if one observes how in his early works the spiritual and sensuous content invariably creates the one form adequate to it, while later one notes with almost as much alarm as admiration how form conditions the material. Poetry alone let him remain wholly himself to the last: whenever he sang, his soul became free. In the Symphonies, on the other hand, he scarcely ever found such self-fulfilment in self-oblivion. Here circumspection was at work, forging with weighty hammer blows and rivetting opposites into unity. Here was a man who would not disclose his mind or let himself be overheard, an “objective” artist, if one may use that term. He may appear at his greatest in the Symphonies to those who refuse to see in a work of art the pure and highly personal expression of the artist’s inner world, with all sorts of autobiographical confessions, and perceive only the reduction of experience to a formula; still more to those for whom all that matters in music is whether and in what manner two chords are linked up or by what procedure of development the next theme is reached. That they are wrong if they see nothing but a purely musical problem in these Symphonies is another matter. The others, for whom the intimate Brahms speaks most touchingly, need only listen closely to these works to find what they seek, in the great symphonic movements as well as in the “small” ones:—successions of unpretentious music, half-concealed between the grandly arrayed and clashing thematic hosts, which tell tales of the most secret things,—private happinesses and afflictions, over

which the stresses of life sweep with wild orchestral tempests. The most revealing confidences of his soul, however, are offered in the last piano pieces. It is at once moving and oppressing to see how resignation becomes more and more clearly uttered in the work of Brahms,—a resignation very unlike that of Hans Sachs in its heavy sadness and doubly affecting in one who seemed so little made for it.

There are four amazing movements in the four Brahms Symphonies: the first and last of No. 1 and the finales of Nos. 3 and 4. The last especially is a miracle of an almost mystical provenance. In this gigantic *passacaglia*, which proceeds in variations of eight bars, no cæsura is to be felt anywhere; it is a single, huge arch. The song of a giant nightingale swells on more and more freely and mightily; a seemingly insignificant germ endlessly yields new shoots and blossoms. This germ is simply the E minor scale rising up to the fifth with an interpolated A $\sharp$ and returning to the tonic by way of the dominant in the lower octave, thus:—E.F $\sharp$. G.A.A $\sharp$. B.B.E. in dotted minims. Brahms borrowed it from Bach's Cantata No. 150, where it forms the bass of the *ciacona*, which he played to Hans von Bülow at the house of Siegfried Ochs, accusing him of having no notion of these masterpieces. Bülow had no more than cool admiration to spare for this choral movement, the cunning structure of which Brahms demonstrated to him with enthusiastic eloquence, for to his mind the great climax which according to Bach's conception is inherent in the superstructure built up over this bass could not be fully realized by voices. "The same thing has struck me too," said Brahms. "What would you say to a symphonic movement written on this theme one day? But it is too lumpish, too straightforward. It would have to be chromatically altered in some way." This, it may be seen, is what he afterwards did when he erected one of the most towering Brahmsian movements on the foundation of Bach's bass. Did the piece take its origin in that theme, or did the theme appear to him as the adequate basis on which to give shape to the vision of this movement as a whole that he bore in his mind? Many of the composer's greatest masterpieces give the distinct impression that it was not the theme but the climax of his development that was the primary idea and

that the theme in its primitive form was only afterwards derived from it. This impression is confirmed by an examination of the master's thematic procedure in the second and third Symphonies. The one-bar motif of adjacent semitones and that of two bars containing his life's motto of F.A.b.F., which he prefixes to the real principal themes of the second and third respectively, plainly indicate such a derivative method, of which the composer himself was perhaps not always conscious. For neither of these motifs appears to belong to the thematic organism; they have been provided to cement the later working-out and to hold the symphonic scaffolding together. Both, however, are used in the most suggestive manner, especially that of the third Symphony, which, here as elsewhere, fulfils its mission as a symbol of fate. It carries the symphonic structure of the opening magnificently, throws a unifying bond about all the movements, and decisively influences the vicissitudes of the other themes. It is least noticeable in the calm and luminous andante, which ends in a kind of Parsifal solemnity. Brahms himself, by the way, adopted a curious attitude towards this movement. Whether he had a particular affection for it which he was shy of betraying, whether he had grown tired of it, or whether it held a recollection he did not care to conjure up, I dare not undertake to decide. In any case, he twice refused to play this quietly tender movement himself, as I witnessed, once as partner in and once as listener to a four-handed performance of the Symphony. Both times he hastily turned over the pages of the andante and growled: "Oh, this is much too tedious!" a remark that could surely not be taken very seriously. He was not to be dissuaded by any entreaties from omitting this star-illuminated piece.

Not quite so important, but perhaps even more evident, is the function of the initial motif (D.C#.D. followed by a step to the fourth below) in the second Symphony. It dominates the opening of many of the themes, especially that of the finale, the somewhat forced gaiety of which contrasts strangely with the Arcadian grace of the last movement but one and the gentle seriousness of the second. Here again is a means of creating a logical unity; but this little elementary motif is capable of such manifold developments that it would be out of place to find in it an excuse for exaggerated admiration of a mastery which Brahms proves far

more astonishingly elsewhere. It is worth mentioning that this constructive means of introducing the principal theme proper by a motif or a group of motifs is one which Bruckner also was fond of using. This is probably the only resemblance between Brahms's symphonic art and Bruckner's, which is hardly of this world at all.

It is surprising to find with what force and mastery Brahms can contrive to let a theme of no particularly symphonic nature grow into an unsuspected stature. This confirms the conjecture that he worked with derivative themes and deduced considerable from inconsiderable things. As an example may be cited the almost coquettishly prancing second subject in the first movement of the third Symphony, which is in itself far from momentous, but which, in the working-out, suddenly becomes profoundly agitated, first in the bassoons, violas and cellos and afterwards in the violins, where it is accompanied by convulsive, feverish pulses in the bass. It is as if a man whom one had thought superficial unexpectedly dropped his everyday mask and offered one a glimpse of his suffering soul. No less moving is the manner in which the muffled, threatening, creeping theme of the finale suddenly rears itself up, heedless of entreaty, and deals out fierce blows, only to become tranquillized again and die away in quiet greatness, united with the themes of the first movement. Here, as well as in the heroic-tragic first and last movements of the first Symphony, is a compelling power and singleness not to be found in every one of Brahms's symphonic movements, not even in the opening movement of the fourth, masterly as it is, which all at once grows inert here and there. One feels an energy that labours with clenched fists suddenly flagging. It may be that Brahms's orchestral sound has something to do with this impression. There is no need to raise once again the tiresome question of the so-called inadequacies of his instrumentation and of the peculiarities that sometimes impair it. Whether Brahms thought orchestrally or merely polyphonically must remain undecided, but the assertion that he did not know perfectly well what he intended to do is the purest absurdity. The acrid, brittle, uncompromising sound of his orchestra corresponds entirely to his nature, and therefore to his work. Brahms, who knew the perfected instruments of our own days



BRAHMS AS CONDUCTOR
Drawings by Willy von Beckerath



and all the effects of which they are capable, of set purpose renounced these effects. His music is robbed of its essentials by those who endeavour to impart to it a false, superficial brilliance that is fundamentally at variance with the man and his work.

Brahms's symphonic work embraces all that is tragic and glorious in his music. There is tragedy even in the most wonderful of these movements, where we hear the unstilled yearning for things gone beyond recall, but more especially in those where he strives to renew the traditions of the classics and proves splendidly that inherited forms may be filled with new matter. Nevertheless, one may safely predict that those portions of his work which show a master's discipline and noble intention as perhaps the most impressive marks of his character, will not be held in so great and lasting an affection as those where he is wholly himself, and where only his pure and great heart, so full of riches and yet so closely guarded, is heard to beat. He deliberately took a path that led him away from the land of romance to seek the land of Bach and Beethoven with all the ardour of his soul; but the spell of the blue flower* was stronger. He fancied that he had eschewed the enchantment, but this was a delusion, for he remained a romantic all his life, a dreamy enthusiast, a deep-feeling recluse, who clothed in new magical sounds the voices of rustling woodlands, the radiant eyes of virginal queens, the scattered tones of lost love-songs—all this, and his own life, blessed by sorrows and raptures. It is there that he is irresistible and unforgettable. Where he played the part of "heir" he had too little to squander, though he won and consolidated precious treasure enough. Only as the eternal youth, as one wrestling and longing and drinking from abundant wellsprings, as one of the beloved fairy-tale princes of music who ever and again awaken to deliver sleeping princesses, did he in truth find the land of Bach and of Beethoven.

The C minor Symphony was a child of woe: only the D minor Concerto and the F minor piano Quintet were as painfully born of the composer's soul. The sketches for the work, with which Brahms came forward in his forty-third year (1876) dated from decades back. In the 'fifties Albert Dietrich saw a draft of the

* The emblem of German romanticism.—E.B.

first movement, and the fact that Brahms kept it beyond the time when he committed one Symphony after another to the flames proves a triumphant vitality that let it survive to a state of perfection. But this endurance shows also what great demands the master made of his first Symphony and how much he appreciated the importance of a cosmic image,—for after Beethoven the symphony can hardly be regarded as anything else.

If one should feel tempted to call Brahms's second Symphony the "idyllic," the third the "heroic" (though it is so only in its first and last movements) and the fourth the "elegiac" (which again does not quite square with the force of the final movement), the first might well be described as the "tragic". Such summary catchwords will at the most fit the general character of each work, and never the nature of separate sections; but Brahms's first Symphony, which tells us more of its creator than he is willing to divulge, must be thought well characterized by the epithet I have chosen. His first symphonic utterance is of a tremendous seriousness, of a concision and hopelessness that reminds one of Kleist. It speaks of a devastating torture of conscience: the dismal shadows cast over a cruelly afflicted soul are lifted but little by little. Only the last movement brings relief, for there the individual loses himself among the masses who go calmly and gladly to their daily task, and becomes one of them; but not before he had been compelled to look down into the blackest abyss of mute despair. The song of mankind rejoicing in its labour at first comes to him as from an unattainable distance, broken and dispersed by the winds, as it were, and reaching him with difficulty. The introduction to the finale, with its mood of night and dawn,* its unearthly, bright ray of light that penetrates the darkness, and its gentle, pious hymn that exhorts to activity, is unique in music.

The first Symphony is, like the fourth, built up to reach its height in the finale, which not only crowns, musically and spiritually, all that has gone before, but is seen from its very proportions to have been planned as the weighty headpiece of the whole structure: it takes up nearly half the Symphony and is thus almost as long as the other three movements together. Brahms maintains its height by the device of leading us down into peaceful

* "*Grauen*," in the original, may mean either dawn or horror.—E.B.

valleys in the middle movements. He could scarcely have reached such altitudes by an uninterrupted ascent from the first movement, which with a kind of teeth-grinding determination climbs higher and higher through rocky crevices into arid and deadly mountain solitudes.

Max Kalbeck sees in the whole Symphony, but more particularly in its first movement, an image of the tragedy of Robert and Clara Schumann, in which Brahms was involved. It is true that the first sketches for the work actually belong to the time of his darkest and most secret struggles with himself, and it may well be asked what other tragedy of his life could have taken shape in this music. But may not the answer be, none at all? For I cannot follow the zealous and loving commentator in this interpretation any more than in that of the third Symphony as the Niederwald effigy of Germania in sound. Brahms doubtless did create out of his inward experience, but never in the sense of a definite programme. An occurrence, even one that took place in his soul alone, the nature of which could have been as well expressed in words, he would never have turned into music. In this extraordinarily concentrated Symphony, too, which seems as if cast in massive bronze, he gave vent to all that was gloomy and disturbed and tortured and febrile in him, but to no actual fact of his outward life.

The slow, extended introduction to the chief portion of the first movement is of a crushing power: in those sinister, measured, monotonous beats of kettledrum, double bassoon and bass strings we seem to hear the relentless tread of fate, and the two motifs, one descending in diatonic and chromatic thirds and the other ascending in the violins in contrary motion, are wedged together like steel girders. The motto of life, inverted and presented as G.E.b.G., imperiously makes its presence heard and comes to dominate the whole more and more, both as a symbol and a constructive element. And the four-bar transition to the principal movement—the chromatic contrary motion of the opening making a sudden grip, followed by a precipitate drop of three semiquavers—is oppressively threatening. It grows into a burrowing phrase that persistently returns, not only during the eagle-flights of the main theme that is derived from the life motto, but throughout what follows. It is driven into the subject-

matter like a nail into the wood of a cross. The sunlessness, the rugged, stony hardness of the themes, which never find songful relief, the rocky strata of the thematic construction, the obdurate, straggling rhythms, impart to the whole an atmosphere of exalted joylessness that is comparable only to that of the F minor Quintet and the D minor Concerto.

The andante moves in a milder air. There is peace in its warm and amply flowing major-minor song. The way in which, here again, germs of the same species produce a variety of blossoms may be judged from the resemblance of the third bar of the quietly fervent first melody to the final cadence of the second, which shines forth like an early sun and seems to bring us a message from Mendelssohn: when it returns in the horn, the solo violin and the oboe, with strings, woodwind chords and plucked cellos tracing circlets of light round it, it sounds as if it came out of a beautiful forest, built up on high.* The scherzo is one of those *chiaroscuro* pieces through which midday ghosts seem to flit, a piece of that new type, Brahms's exclusive property, which he opposed to the impetuous humoresques of Beethoven. It provides the right foil for a finale that is gigantic in every sense of the term. When to those weary woodwind progressions in thirds horn and violins add an allusion, in a sorrowful minor key, to the later hymn melody, which voices the deepest despondency and is at once suppressed again; when ghostly string pizzicatos are precipitated forward in dire alarm, as if pursued; when a theme that is to become jubilant in the principal section appears in ghastly distorted demisemiquavers that flit up and down in the violins like the shadows of disturbed bats; when a breathless woodwind phrase is heard in convulsive cries, only to reveal itself immediately afterwards, announced by the thundering entry of a kettledrum, as the horn's heavenly annunciation of comfort, supported by a long pedal-point and irradiated by a flood of string tremolos; we receive the impression that a higher power is at work, one so great and mysterious as even Brahms was but rarely able to summon. The approach to the climax from the opening of the calmly festive melody of peace, where "any ass" may discover a resemblance to Beethoven's "Ninth," the ever more

* The author alludes to Mendelssohn's part-song: "*Wer hat dich, du schöner Wald, aufgebaut so hoch da droben?*"—E.B.

forcibly onrushing jubilation, into which that call of consolation in the horn now sounds far more confidently, the exulting buoyancy of the stretto-like coda with its mightily swelling hymn of thanksgiving, which in the introduction sounded so anxious and despondent,—all this marks the triumph of this work and its creator, who has now victoriously overcome all his misgivings.

The career of this work, which shows the master at his sublimest and as the worthy successor of the great German composers, was a chequered one from the beginning. Even to-day it has won little more than awed admiration: it is neither affable nor pompous enough to awaken love in the hearer. Oddly enough, Brahms entrusted the very first performance of a Symphony that bristled with problems and confronts the conductor with many technical pitfalls, to no other than Otto Dessoff in Carlsruhe, concerning whom he had expressed a sufficiently disparaging opinion. "Dessoff, now, is absolutely not the right man in any way for this, the only enviable post in Vienna;" he wrote regarding the conductor of the Viennese Philharmonic concerts; "there are special reasons why he still continues to beat time, but not a soul approves. The orchestra has positively deteriorated under him." Was Brahms unduly anxious to show his gratitude for Dessoff's resignation of this very appointment, which he had tendered because the always reactionary Philharmonic orchestra had declined to play Brahms's A major Serenade and the conductor refused to bow to such an infraction of his authority? (Brahms himself conducted the work with success at the next concert, having addressed the musicians in a dignified speech that was accepted in the same spirit.) Or was it his attachment to Carlsruhe, which Dessoff's predecessor, Hermann Levi, had made into a veritable Brahms city and where his *Song of Triumph* had been performed so enthusiastically and so much to his own satisfaction? Both reasons would be truly Brahmsian. But the work suffered and made its way but slowly. In Vienna it was listened to with a respectful want of understanding. Hanslick himself, who did not follow Brahms quite indiscriminately, could not deny an uncomfortable feeling that he had remained a stranger to the work. The fact that this coldly majestic composition was so long in gripping the public is doubtless

to be attributed in the main to unsatisfactory interpretations. Even Fritz Steinbach, Hans von Bülow's successor at Meiningen, whom Brahms esteemed as an "unsurpassable" conductor of his and other works, to my mind clothed the C minor Symphony in splendid robes which did not suit it and with his false effects gained the very opposite of the inwardness it demands. Truly perfect, nay staggering performances of this most forceful symphonic creation by the master I confess to having heard, in spite of Arthur Nikisch and his otherwise marvellous Brahms interpretations, only under Felix Weingartner, who piled it up and made it transparent as no other conductor.

The other Symphonies may be dealt with more briefly than this, the most austere and inaccessible of the four. Interpretative phrases are especially superfluous in the case of the second, which, if one excepts its somewhat morose finale, is a serenade rather than a symphony and reminds us that not only Beethoven, but Haydn and Mozart too wrote symphonic works and that theirs would be better called *sinfoniettas* to-day. The work is suffused with the sunshine and the warm winds playing on the water which recall the summers at Pörschach that gave it life. The first movement particularly is a poem of ripening cornfields, fresh lakeland breezes and young, carefree love. The comfortably swinging first subject at once creates a sense of wellbeing with its sincere and sensuous gladness; the darker second theme, intoned like a deep-voiced confident folk melody, might have been invented by the Mendelssohn of the Scottish Symphony, wholly Brahmsian though it is in its true emotion and its singing in thirds, lightly supported by violins. And the auxiliary thematic material, derived and developed from the preliminary motif, unifies the whole movement into an ingenious and delightful structure. It is like a fair day in its creator's life and outshines the other three sections,—the brooding andante, the rather unimportant scherzo, whose theme is rhythmically altered in the two presto interludes without a change of its essential nature, and the broad, sweeping finale which, for all its lively, driving motion, strikes one as cheerless and artificial in its briskness. The impression of the unsymphonic nature of this work is probably due partly to a prejudice that expects to see cosmic images and

not mere genre pictures in such a composition, and partly to the metre adopted for the first movement. It is remarkable that Brahms did not employ the common time almost invariably used by the symphonic masters from Mozart to Schubert in their opening movements until he came to his fourth Symphony. The initial movement of the first is in $\frac{6}{8}$, that of the second in $\frac{3}{4}$ and that of the third in $\frac{6}{4}$. The round-dance nature of the $\frac{3}{4}$ measure in the D major Symphony is especially difficult to take seriously, and rightly so, for this is a light-hearted work, a declaration of love in symphonic form.

Brahms was particularly fond of this clear and tender composition, as might be judged from the little mystifications with which he raised the expectations his friends had of the new work that followed its elder sister within the space of a year. He persisted in describing it as gloomy and awesome, never to be played by any musicians without a mourning band on their sleeve. He replied in a tone of waggish secrecy to Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, who was impatiently waiting for the score and scolded him for not rewarding her discretion by sending her the work, which she knew to be ready ("May the deuce take such modesty!"), and who, incidentally, took exception to his "spelling so noble a word as 'symphony' with an f." "It really is no Symphony," he writes, "but merely a *Sinfonie*, and I shall have no need to play it to you beforehand. You merely sit down at the piano, put your little feet alternately on each pedal and strike the chord of F minor for some time, top and bottom and changing between *fortissimo* and *pianissimo*. That will gradually give you the clearest picture of the 'new one.' " And he was as pleased as Punch with the glad surprise and delight of the adored woman and of all his friends when they saw this sunny work.

The law of serial appearance already observed in Brahms's work also governs his Symphonies: they came in pairs. The first two were completed in the years 1876 and 1877; the third did not follow until six years later (1883) and was succeeded by the fourth in two years. The antithetical nature of each pair is itself explained by this proximity, for the master's keen æsthetic feeling would never have tolerated two similar works side by side.

The third Symphony at once secured a victory. At a single

stroke it made the name of Brahms as a symphonist resound throughout the world as it had never before sounded in its full resonance. It has remained the public's favourite among the four. A moment ago, obeying rather a general than a personal feeling, I described it as the "heroic" Symphony, but if it can be truly called that, it is no armed and clattering heroism that inspired it, such as we find, for example, in the dramas of German Emperors by Ernst von Wildenbruch, whom Brahms esteemed as man and artist and whom Alfred Kerr dismissed for us with a quotation from Scheffel in place of criticism:—"He is but a trumpeter, and yet I love him well!"* The hero in Brahms's Symphony is no trumpeter: one is rather inclined to imagine him in the person of Bismarck in his student days, though no vestige of an undergraduate character clings to this valorous work, which bears its "free but glad" upon a clear brow. The unboastful and self-assured heroism of the German youth who looks with flashing eyes out upon the world, who can dream and love as well as fight, confronts us in these symphonic movements. Only the gnarled, ominously opening finale in Brahms's tragic key of F minor, which at first seems to conjure up the powers of the bottomless pit and then to throttle the darkly muttering initial themes in a sudden wild grip, rears itself up to a great height, eager for combat. A haughty and triumphant theme, obstinately accentuating the weak beat, resounds in an orchestra in which trombones and drums alone are silent, like a barbaric battle-song in which one feels impelled to join: "Oh, Father, give us vict'ry! Up and onward! Let us die, or else for e'er prevail!" And now a tumult is unchained which gradually disentangles itself, until the pensively retarded coda brings an apotheosis of the opening of the whole Symphony, consolidating the key of F major and ending with the tranquil and solemn double theme of the beginning. Here is an image of the pugnacious German musical stone-mason Brahms, just as the immediately preceding intermezzo in C minor, the counterpart of that in the G minor Quartet, is the image of the pensive Brahms, lost in the recollection of past love and past woe. This wholly romantic woodland melody, spun over with triplets, the opening of which in the cello at once makes

* "*Er ist nur ein Trompeter, und doch bin ich ihm gut!*" in Scheffel's *Trompeter von Säckingen*.—E.B.

one desire the sound of a horn, is one of the twilight tunes sung longingly out of an apprehensive and overflowing heart which more than anything else endear Brahms to us. They remind us that his name is derived from the *Brams*, the gorse of the Low-German heathlands: we seem to see him with his arms full of twigs with golden blossoms and bronze-green leaves. And there is a more than merely intellectual pleasure in observing how the motto (F.A. F.) prefixed to the work is welded into the subject-matter of the whole Symphony, sometimes discernible only by the score-reader's detective eye, sometimes as a fundamental feature. It strives magnificently upward at the beginning, raised each time by a fifth or a fourth and supporting the added principal subject which, like many others in Brahms's work, having soared high at first, seems for a time to drag along the ground with lame wings, only to rise again the more vigorously. The first two bars of this main theme, by the way, its musical germ, so to speak, may be found in a passage of the andante in Schumann's B flat major Symphony (and elsewhere in Schumann), just as the chief subject of Brahms's fourth Symphony may be found almost identically in the adagio of Beethoven's *Hammerclavier* Sonata in the form of a transitory episode. Both instances may be accepted as particularly convincing proofs of the absurdity of reminiscence-hunting in the music of the great masters. Brahms stood in no need of living on the leavings of others; we see here how rich a harvest he could win from a seed that had been so heedlessly left lying on the ground, without suspecting that it was not the product of his own winnowing, for both themes are entirely Brahmsian. What matters is not the sequence of notes in a theme, but only the way in which a musician makes it his own fruitful possession.

Unlike the third Symphony, which at once took hold of the world as otherwise only the clarinet Quintet did, the fourth long remained misunderstood and down to the present day has never been truly loved, perhaps for the very reason that it is the most personal and profound of all and, next to the first, the weightiest. Even the sworn knights of the Brahms Order had difficulty in understanding it, incomprehensible though this seems to-day. Kalbeck positively entreated the master to withhold the work from the public and so to save himself an inevitable and

conspicuous failure. Hanslick, after a first hearing of it in a performance on two pianos by Brahms and Ignaz Brüll, declared with a heavy sigh when the first movement was over and everybody else remained silent:—"You know, I had the feeling that two enormously clever people were cudgelling each other." It is hard to understand such a verdict on this pale, autumnal, elegiac first movement that draws a veil of dull silver across its most unruly themes and flows like a gentle brook among banks overgrown with meadow saffron. Still less would it apply to the nobly folk-like andante that seems to be intoned by a choir-leader. A sideslip into the Phrygian mode imparts to it a quite peculiar feature and in its development it assumes one of those warmly welling and falteringly emotional melodic formations that afford us a glimpse of the composer's very heart. The episode that prepares the second theme is of interest: like some airy vision it sparkles through scattered semiquaver triplets and only afterwards takes shape decisively—of interest as an example of the cunning organic introduction of a theme as well as for the surprising analogy of this transition with that in the andante of Mahler's second Symphony, where in spite of an outward resemblance in sound and mood and logical development the effect is totally different. A warning, yet again, for those who are fond of tracking down musical parallels.

Hanslick's comparison to a cudgelling would have been more appropriate to the blustering scherzo, about the noisy mirth of which there is something forced and constrained, in spite of its knotty themes and its rattling of drums, its uproar of trumpets and triangle ringing. It bounces along like a rustic Shakespearean clown, to whose humour the surreptitious little auxiliary theme of a Cordelia who loves and writes under the name of Elisabeth makes a rejoinder in passing.

It is not surprising that the final movement, the most powerful edifice erected by the will and the great comprehensive mind of Brahms, was grasped and appreciated at its true worth only much later. These thirty-two strict variations on an eight-bar theme used either as a ground-bass or in double counterpoint—or rather thirty-one, for the coda makes use of the theme more fancifully and abandons the original number of bars,—these variations, which do not plainly show their divisions, are spanned

into so gigantic a single, towering arch, that the exalted critics, unable to recognize in it either the rondo form, a free sonata form, or any of the formal schemes usual in a finale, racked their brains over the problems with which a crafty master confronted them. And Brahms was malicious enough to refrain from giving the least hint to the omniscient tribe and to take a fiendish pleasure in their vain endeavours to crack this hard nut. Perhaps he was right in thinking that he had written the solution plainly enough upon the portal by letting all the wind instruments emphatically intone the theme taken from the *ciacona* in Bach's Cantata, thus setting it in huge brazen letters in front of the movement. Moreover, the regularity of the eight-bar periods which so admirably merge into each other might have led to the recognition of the *passacaglia* form of this enigmatic composition. One can only stand in disconcerted wonderment before this microcosm in sound, before the unheard-of diversity and the soulfulness of these variations which, for all their apparent freedom, are so strictly bound to the thematic prototype that, as Hugo Riemann has shown in his extraordinary analysis of the work, they contain only twelve bars in excess of the 31×8 that should have resulted from a rigorous adherence to the eight-bar scheme. It is a feast for the ear, this welding into one whole, this function of one member with another,—and the golden pails which the rising and descending heavenly powers hand to each other are brimful of the gods' invigorating draughts that make human life in truth worth living. We are in the presence of the mystery of a master's creative processes.

The E minor Symphony was first performed at Meiningen under the composer's own direction. He had long hesitated and considered, for the misgivings of his Viennese friends had made him uncertain. But he would have thought it cowardly not to "eat up the broth" he had cooked for himself in a work which even Elisabeth von Herzogenberg had welcomed with so much reserve that he was prepared to think of it as a "symphony that miscarried." Yet he would not deny that he had written it with absolute conviction, with his heart and soul. He was to prove right. The concert tour he undertook with Bülow, which carried the work through Germany and into Holland, was one long triumph for both the composer and the conductor of the

Symphony. Richard Strauss, who as a young conductor was Bülow's deputy at Meiningen in those days and who in his recollections of his superior very amusingly relates how he and Bülow took the drum parts in Brahms's honour when the latter conducted his *Academic Festival Overture*, but were unable to count rests, and how the two General Musical Directors thus "blundered" in competition, answered my questions about Brahms as conductor by saying that he could form no clear judgment because the works had been rehearsed by Bülow to the last details. But he used a curious and extremely significant phrase:—"After the over-refined and ingenious way in which Bülow, for all his competence and adherence to the letter, interpreted these works, the simple manner in which Brahms himself conducted them could make no great impression. . . . But one did hear the music." Which is very different from the very mannered unmannerliness of many a modern conductor. That it was precisely this Symphony which caused Bülow to ask the Duke (to whom Brahms rendered thanks by the dedication of his *Parzengesang*) for his discharge, has already been said. I have also referred to the reconciliation in Vienna of the two friends, whom I can never imagine side by side without thinking of the amusing contrast between a St. Bernard dog and a Pomeranian. The dedication of the violin Sonata in D minor to Bülow was the seal upon a relationship that thereafter remained undisturbed. The E minor Symphony was also the work with which the Viennese public took its deeply moving farewell of the master in his last illness, and this surrounds it with a faint, transfiguring aureole.

The whole of his symphonic work, and more especially this last purely orchestral composition, shows most plainly that conflict in the mind of a creative musician who strove to unite the romantic and the classic into a single, more highly organized artistic nature. He never quite succeeded, but there is something strongly affecting in the worship of the musical ancestors to which he was urged by a superhuman determination to attain to a Bach-like mastery. It is idle to interpret this as affectation. The curious fact is, however, that where he comes nearest to succeeding, where the polished cast no longer shows any fissures and all is shaped into that apparently balanced form for which Frau von

Herzogenberg has the doubtful praise of his "unromantically bald manner," the hearer is respectfully frigid to the verge of indifference. Nowhere, on the other hand, does he command such tender affection as in those works where there is no complete settlement of the conflict between that which was born with him and that which he acquired, between an originality that cannot be learnt and qualities gained by tenacious study. This is why these four Symphonies are more than the seal of his highest achievement: they are the expression of his painful wrestlings with his conscience, the symbol of his maturity with all its robust, recalcitrant manliness and its almost womanly, reticent inwardness.

These works show him definitely formed. He no longer changes thereafter: the end of his life has begun.

XVII

SNAPSHOTS OF THE MASTER'S LIFE

IT was a life of outward regularity, for all its changes—and even they bore repetition marks—and of the richest inward movement which Brahms now lived. The summer was consecrated to work and extended as long as possible. In various attractive places, preferably situated near some water, if only a flowing river, work after work was brought to the light. It is true that his strikingly abundant production within a few months can be deceptive, for he would carry each composition so long in his mind, often for years together, that all that was needed at times was a finishing touch of the pen. A *finis*, seldom written with complete satisfaction, often heralded the announcement to his friends, and later to the impatiently waiting musical world, of a work that had been long maturing.

During the winter he was rarely at home. He was more and more frequently and urgently requested to visit German and Dutch cities as authentic interpreter of his own music or as witness of its first performance. He was tempted with conductor's fees such as were by no means usual in those days and were as a rule paid only to star soloists. These continual concert tours, which he found increasingly irksome, he liked to combine with visits to various friends, especially Clara Schumann and the Herzogenbergs, but also Reinthaler, Grimm, Scholz and many newly acquired ones, such as the Beckeraths of Wiesbaden and the famous professor of surgery, Wilhelm Engelmann, to whom he dedicated the B flat major Quartet, and his wife, an admirable pianist, in Utrecht. Nor did he forget Widmann, whom he saw mainly during his summer sojourns at Thun.

It is touching to think of Brahms, during one of his visits to Hamburg, where we know he had been made an honorary citizen,* fetching his stepmother from a too remote suburb and

*The *Fest- und Gedenksprüche* for 8-part chorus, *Op.* 109, were his solemn musical thanksgiving for the honour.

lodging her in his hotel. He made her stay there by his side and the simple woman was embarrassed and happy at once to be among her famous "son's" friends and acquaintances or to appear at his arm in a concert hall. He took pleasure in the growing admiration of his contemporaries and repulsed it only when it was expressed in such empty phrases as those of a lady who asked him with upturned eyes:—"How can you possibly manage to write such divine adagios?" whereupon he replied with mock-secrecy:—"Well, you know, my publishers order them like that." He enjoyed being spoilt in the houses of his friends and was glad of his hosts' affection, but only so long as it was affection without formality; as soon as he noticed that he was causing a disturbance in the family's everyday affairs, however willingly it might be endured, or suspected exaggerated deference, he would disappear and stay at an hotel on his next visit, deaf to all invitations. However, these things repeat themselves, and only special journeys undertaken on special occasions shall from now on be related.

He felt the need of keeping continually in touch with other musicians. This desire induced him to found the Wiener Tonkünstlerverein, and he worked ardently on its behalf. He asked Franz Wüllner for the statutes of a similar association already existing in Cologne, for he was anxious to see whether people were more reasonable elsewhere in such matters than in Vienna, where he could not always agree with the committee that had been elected. Soon after the society had actually come into existence, he was elected honorary president, but he took its affairs seriously and did not content himself with being a nominal representative. He did not wish it to be merely a sociable fellowship, much as he liked the weekly gatherings, to which he wished to attract not only his old friends and associates, but the younger musicians in the city as well. New works were to be performed or tried over on these evenings before a chosen professional audience, and he started by giving an excellent example: his new songs, piano pieces and vocal quartets were sung and played there, with the composer at the piano. But he also desired each artist passing through or appearing in Vienna to visit this circle. There is no need to emphasize the fact that

Brahms was the honoured head of the organization, and much in request.

Those who would take pleasure in the master and find him in good humour, relaxed, talkative and animated, had only to join the meeting on a Monday night in the Mozart room of the Musikverein building, where the members had soon swelled to the number of a hundred and thirty. When he was in Vienna he did not miss a single gathering or committee meeting; at the latter he presided and would so energetically defend views that were often drastically opposed to those of the others that the atmosphere would grow heated and there was a veritable shower of threats of resignation from various members. Nearly all the celebrated artists—and not musicians alone—who visited Vienna were now the guests of the Tonkünstlerverein; even Liszt and Rubinstein once sat at its supper table in diplomatic peacefulness. But Brahms preferred the social occasions on which he could be comfortably and unconstrainedly together with the young people and the old bachelors. I am fortunate enough to have experienced one of these evenings and, as it happened, one on which Brahms himself sat at the piano, accompanying the sweetest of Viennese troubadours, the opera tenor Gustav Walter, in some of his songs. Rarely have I found the master in such high spirits and so ready to take part in the most mischievous jests.

To the last Brahms never ceased to show his interest in the society and to do much to heighten the prestige of German musicians, who were still treated somewhat as if they were gipsies. Even during his last illness he took part in the perusal and verification of the chamber music for wind instruments for the best of which a prize had been offered at his suggestion, a prize he had secretly increased by a considerable amount out of his own pocket. After his death the society continued according to his ideals and it was particularly the world-famous piano teacher, Theodor Leschetitzky, a man sparkling with wit and malice, who upheld it by his lively personality; but the true spirit of the association had died with its founder and it began to flag. About ten years after Brahms's death I endeavoured to infuse fresh blood into the somewhat calcined organism of the Tonkünstlerverein by enlivening the extremely conservative and

exclusive programmes of the musical evenings, and trying to enlist new members among the young and revolutionary Viennese musicians; but the best of the older generation had died and the younger seemed to regard the majority of the earlier members as too reactionary. The experiment failed and to-day the society which ought to be kept alive and held in reverence as the idea and the achievement of Johannes Brahms leads but an illusory existence.

At the beginning of 1888 he met two famous foreign colleagues in Leipzig, at the house of Adolf Brodsky, who had taken up the cause of his chamber music and his violin Concerto with remarkable energy. They were Edvard Grieg and Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky. It may be that he was so heartily fond of the Norwegian because he too worked on a basis of folksong and let his music take root in the home soil. The Russian's work interested him less because it struck him as worldly and cosmopolitan rather than indigenous, sprung from the drawing-room rather than the soil. At any rate, he had a great liking for Grieg later on, but could establish no contact with Tchaikovsky. Perhaps his thoroughly sound nature became unconsciously aware of the other's homosexuality and was instinctively repelled by it, perhaps he merely disliked the all too mundane demeanour, the perfumed Cossack's savagery and gilt-edged melancholy, of the composer of the *Pathetic Symphony*, who was so elegant and yet so inwardly torn by the tragedy of his unhappy disposition, which at last drove him into voluntary death. Brahms was unable to take a liking to him and silently dismissed him. Tchaikovsky, on the other hand, was anything but silent: neither in his reminiscences nor in many a verbal assertion did he disguise his aversion to Brahms, whom he misunderstood to a positively grotesque degree. It would undoubtedly be unjust to attribute this antipathy to professional jealousy or even to the clash of their violin Concertos, which were composed almost at the same time and actually in the same key. They figure in about the same number of programmes to-day,* but at that time the rivalry of Brahms's work was crushing for Tchaikovsky's original piece which

* In England there are a score of performances of Brahms's violin Concerto for one of Tchaikovsky's.—E.B.

Hanslick had stigmatized, with his usual virtuosity in missing the bull's-eye, as "music with a bad smell." A dislike of Brahms due to prejudice would thus not be incomprehensible; but it would be seeing Tchaikovsky in too unfavourable a light to attribute his total indifference to the music of Brahms exclusively to personal reasons. There was a racial difference of the most thorough-going kind between them, and it must not be forgotten that he regarded Bach, who had done him no harm, with the same lack of understanding and felt his work to be "a veritable classical infliction." Of Brahms he thought that he made a point of being obscure and was shy of speaking in a tone that could go straight to the heart, and he suspected him of merely coquetting with profound emotion in order to hide the utter poverty of his fancy. Nay, he went so far as to maintain that "he writes fluently, adroitly and purely, but without a trace of independent originality, losing himself in endless variations on classical themes." Here is one of the most striking illustrations to the chapter, "The mutual judgment of contemporaries," and this was my chief reason for making so much of this case. Some inflexible law seems to govern these things, a spiritual chemistry, so to speak, which conditions such mysterious reactions and incompatibilities. Thus it was in the case of Brahms *v.* Bruckner, of Wagner *v.* Brahms and most obviously of all in the regrettable antagonism of Goethe and Kleist. It would be more understandable if in such cases the "colleagues" were to avoid each other; but the contrary is true.

The faculty of love and the need of love in Brahms are strangely constituted: his heart remains true to old attachments and is yet capable of flaming up again and again, of hoping and suffering in silence. It is a profoundly diffident heart and he who bears it in his breast, for all his consciousness of what he is worth, lacks the audacity to woo and the self-confidence to win. This he experienced once again at Frankfort during one of his visits to his old friend who of all human beings still remained nearest to his soul. He went to see Clara Schumann, and it was her daughter Julie who captivated him. The impression the young girl had made on him in Hamburg, when he met her there with her mother, grew into one of aching delight, for the love of his youth had

risen from its tomb and stood before him as a living image. He had long ago dedicated to this child of Robert Schumann's the Variations on one of her father's themes, without receiving more than conventional thanks for the gift, and he now found himself again treated with a cool and detached friendliness by a young woman who had perhaps no notion of what it was that agitated him. Once more the easily discouraged Johannes swallowed his pain and neither Clara nor her other daughters could account for his restless and melancholy manner, which they had never before observed so strongly pronounced in him. But Julie suddenly became engaged and Brahms, in his desperate trouble, could only control himself just enough to stammer a hasty congratulation. He walked about as in a nightmare and departed without confiding a single word to Clara, perhaps mainly because he would have felt this to be indelicate, as matters stood. Julie died after less than two years of matrimony and Brahms carried one wound more in his soul.

This happened before Elisabeth von Herzogenberg came into his life a second time. A love such as Brahms bore this glorious creature was not to be extinguished and could only be temporarily overshadowed, even after Elisabeth's early death. Nevertheless, at the close of the 'eighties he once again cherished serious thoughts of marriage, and once again music was the go-between. He was ever defenceless against a beautiful, dark voice, and beautiful and dark was the voice of young Hermine Spies, who carried his songs with so much zeal and success through the German concert rooms. This singer, who had quickly attained to fame, was a fresh and unaffected girl, and the evident pleasure Brahms took in her was surely not due only to her uncommonly deep and sonorous contralto whose euphonious fullness seemed to rise out of warm summer nights. The master half-jestingly and half-seriously showed his affection for this bright young woman with her clear eyes, her pretty little snub-nose, her light-brown curls and her slender but shapely figure. Both were much teased, but Hermine Spies never seemed to consider the possibility of being loved by so great a celebrity, who moreover was long past his fiftieth year. She took it as part of the banter of which he was so fond when he clinked glasses with her at dinner, asking her to drink the health of her future father-

in-law and, on seeing her hesitate disconcertedly, said to the others:—"She is trying to think whether Brahms has still got a father." But when he sent her a song with the significant title of "Come soon," set specially for her to the poem of their mutual friend Klaus Groth, describing it as a "joke of two admirers" and writing her one of his evasively suggestive letters, and she still refused to understand his secret proposals, he considered the affair to be at an end. It was no doubt better so for both of them, for Hermine Spies, though a sympathetic singer, was not profoundly musical and emotionally somewhat commonplace. She knew it well enough, too, and there would have been no need for Brahms to point it out to her in his blunt way. Her magnificent voice, her youth and engaging nature, had to compensate for her defects, and it is more than questionable whether her domestic virtues would have been great enough for the exacting master to endure her in spite of her musical insufficiency. Besides, she was so materially minded as to be capable of cancelling at the last moment an engagement with some concert society whose whole performance depended upon her on the pretext of "indisposition" for the sake of singing elsewhere for a higher fee the same evening. And we know how Brahms despised money and hated greed. It would have been no happy union, rather a permanent thunderstorm; but however that may be, she did not understand him at first, or would not, and then, when she would, it was too late.

After that only one love touched his much-tried heart. Again it was a singer who made it beat faster. This time, however, it was not the wonder of a voice, but the wonder of a soul, which for the last time shook to its foundation a nature so painfully subjected to tranquil renunciation. When Alice Barbi stood on the concert platform, each hearer felt that she was singing for him alone. This black-curled Italian with her dark, dream-laden eyes and her tragic maidenly mien, sang with the simplicity of genius. Her interpretation of German songs, and especially those of Brahms, was an experience. None before or after her saturated them so with feeling and truth, none united a natural nobility of style so perfectly with an indescribably tender expressiveness. What Joachim once wrote to Brahms concerning Schröder-Devrient applies as much to Alice Barbi:—"I have

never heard such singing; it is as if heart and mind revealed themselves in the very breath with which she begins, and she continues so soulfully that one forgets to ask whether her voice is beautiful or what it is that produces this captivating magic." But Barbi's voice was full and supple into the bargain, a small but infinitely warm mezzo-soprano of the colour of deep-hued violets and capable of expressing the most secret and impassioned emotions. The reader knows already that Brahms, after her first recital, said, profoundly stirred:—"To-day I have heard my songs for the first time." At the last concert given by this incomparable artist he unexpectedly sat down at the piano and honoured her before all the world by accompanying her in his songs. Such was his way of confessing his emotions. No tell-tale word ever came over his lips and only his intimates suspected what was the matter with him. But he did not suffer from this love, which was like a fair sunset glow, a last radiance and last message from the land of the sun. And it seems symbolic that it should be Alice Barbi who was to throw the first handful of earth on the dead master's coffin.

Music ever healed the injuries of which his rough and sometimes bitter nature made him guilty at times. His irritable, pugnacious and morosely repelling disposition may well be attributed to his renunciation of eroticism, his continual forgoing of the happiness which a loving man finds in the arms of the chosen woman. That he, who both as man and as artist was full of the tenderest chivalry towards women and who in his songs gave voice to love as no other, had to be content with sordid substitutes, is part of his life's tragedy, the more so because this privation resulted in tortures of his honest conscience and in inexplicable accesses of distrust of and inconsiderateness towards his friends. Here too music was the saving grace, for him and for the others.

It was so in his quarrel with Joachim. The great violinist was defenceless against Brahms's music, and the latter knew it well. It is touching to find with how much shyness he approached his friend in the late summer of 1878, before any actual rupture had occurred in their association. His object was to ask whether Joachim would be interested in the violin Concerto which he had

written solely for the sake of this ideal interpreter of his chamber music. After the completion of the violin Sonatas, too, it looks as if he wished to have the sanction of Joachim to justify his indulging in such superfluous tinkering—as he liked to call it. It is curious, all the same, that, while he accepted and followed the advice and objections of his early companion where they concerned matters of composition, he was disinclined to act upon purely violinistic suggestions, always urgently made by the experienced wielder of that instrument. He agreed to scarcely anything but bow marks and fingerings; otherwise he adhered to his text, and not always to the advantage of his notation, which has often been misread by violinists. Once there was a lengthy discussion by correspondence concerning the writing of ties over staccato dots, which has not the same meaning for the violinist as for the pianist; but insistently as Joachim tried to make this difference clear to him, he obstinately clung to his view that different readings in such matters can only lead to still greater confusion and failed to alter his notation, which was afterwards duly misinterpreted.

The violin Concerto, dedicated “to him for whom it was written,” as the autograph in Joachim’s copy of the score has it, falls between the first and the second “symphonic period.” The composer’s occupation with the orchestra and its problems induced him to try his hand at new combinations. He was especially enticed by the task of letting the sound of a solo violin contrast with the rest of the string instruments and, again, of infusing it now and again into the orchestral sound as a mere colour value. The violin Concerto shows how lovingly he combined the filigree work of his subtly written principal part with the rougher labour of erecting the orchestral marble pillars.

It is significant for the master’s pleasure in experimenting with orchestral sound, which he could leave unsatisfied for years on end, that the two Overtures also come within the interval between the second Symphony and the third. They are the *Academic Festival Overture* and the *Tragic Overture*. “One weeps, the other laughs,” he said of them and thus applied to them the title of a play often performed at the Burgtheater in those days, being himself at a loss how to name them.* He offered them to his

* Why not “*Jean (Johannes) qui pleure et Jean qui rit ?*”—E.B.

faithful publisher only after a good deal of indirect questioning and cautious preliminaries. At first he merely announced the completion of the two pieces to Fritz Simrock, telling him of a "very merry Academic Festival Overture with Guadeamus and all sorts of things," and confessing afterwards:—"Being given this opportunity, I could not forbear to satisfy my melancholy disposition by writing an Overture for a tragedy as well." Only in his next letter did he make a tentative proposal:—"What do you say to the Overtures? You will say, and very rightly, that you have no need of them, so long as those by Weber, Cherubini and Mendelssohn are not sold out." Nor have the two works as yet won their competition against their famous precursors, in spite of the jovial row, the clever interweaving of splendid students' songs and the brilliant jubilation of the 'Academic'; in spite of the imposing tread, the oppressive nocturnal mood and the magnificent draping of the 'Tragic,' which, it is true, has a misty northern colour and is somewhat sullen in sound. It is possible that the serious Overture, the length of which makes it hardly practicable for theatrical use and which could only be prefixed to one of the mightiest tragedies in the world's literature, may have been designed as a prelude to *Faust*. If so, it would depict the speculative, sceptical and atheistic protagonist, but nothing of sardonic Mephistophelian malignity and nothing of the love of Gretchen. Dingelstedt, who directed the Burgtheater at that time (1880) and proposed to give a new production of *Faust*, had arranged that Brahms should write an important score of incidental music for Goethe's drama; but he afterwards let the commission fall through in so frivolous a manner that the master never forgave this cynical, sophisticated and flippant courtier of the stage. In any case, the suggestion that the *Tragic Overture* is a prelude to *Faust* is hardly plausible; its whole character points rather to *Macbeth* or *Medea*, and Brahms himself declared that he had not had any particular tragedy in mind when he wrote it.

It is otherwise with the violin Concerto. This is one of the master's major works, but it took a very long time to establish itself as *the* violin Concerto after those by Beethoven and Mendelssohn. When it was new and Joachim courageously carried it through the German and English concert rooms, meeting all

opposition with renewed performances until the prejudice was dispelled and the victory won, it was called "a concerto against the violin" and even Hanslick, who was again and again called upon to perform the feat of reconciling the cautious reservations of his criticism of particular works—honest criticism, let it be said, as honest as it was wrong-headed—with his summary enthusiasm for Brahms, became a veritable Jeremiah of foreboding; he doubted the eventual success of this Concerto, and accused it of showing a halting, tired and all too reflective invention. He was in every way wrong. The array of the thematic material in the orchestral introduction already has that wealth of phrase characteristic of Brahms in a mood to produce music from the amplitude of his mind and not disposed to squeeze out each theme to the last in one of his fits of parsimony. He moreover achieves a little stroke of genius here by merely indicating the warmly lyrical second subject by an adumbrating figure in order to introduce it later in the course of the movement in a doubly ingratiating form. After the freely improvising entry of the solo violin the player at first seems to try over the themes and only afterwards to decide in favour of the first subject, a melody that gives the visual impression of a slender and serious vestal virgin in a nobly flowing garment, calmly descending the steps of her white temple, and, by the way, reminds one a little of the refrain in Senta's ballad in *The Flying Dutchman*; it proves once again, like the resemblance to Walther von Stolzing's prize song of the main theme of the A major violin Sonata (which is accordingly sometimes called the *Meistersinger* Sonata), how little the spheres of invention of the two masters are removed from each other.

The thoughtful, idyllic andante and the finale with its gipsy-like fiddling in fiery double stopping are, each in its own way, precious, vital and masterly pieces. They only pale a little in comparison with the first movement, with the singing and defiance of which—it has something of the dreams and broils of Liliencron's moorland wanderer*—they will not blend quite organically. But perhaps this feeling is wrong and would never have been experienced, if one did not know that the work was

* *Der Haidegänger*, a poem by Detlev von Liliencron published, with others, in 1890.—E.B.

originally intended to have four movements and that Brahms "stumbled over the adagio and scherzo." He regretted them for a long time. "The middle movements have gone," he writes, "and of course they were the best ! But I have written a poor adagio for it." Whether the two movements that were apparently rejected for reasons of style did not return again in the B flat major piano Concerto is not certain, but the supposition is not to be easily dismissed. It is equally possible, however, that he may have intended to save them up for a second violin Concerto, of which he made sketches immediately after the first. Unfortunately he laid it aside again.

Violinists ventured only gradually to approach a work that is one of those seemingly inaccessible things in music which become clearer and more full of meaning at each hearing and disclose their treasures like a windowless chapel, mysteriously lighted from no one knows where, to the semi-darkness of which the watchful eye must accustom itself before it may behold all the magnificent carvings and shrines and relics. Joachim was at first the only guide through the supposed maze of the work; next his then little pupil Marie Soldat, whom Brahms greatly liked and often patronized, had the courage to play it, and she had a striking success with this thoroughly masculine composition. Afterwards, in the 'nineties, a boy of twelve played it, and when Brahms entered the directors' box of the Musikverein to hear the performance, he expressed his expectations with much spiteful sarcasm, for he disliked infant prodigies. "I have too often seen the most astounding cases," he said, "and found that they came to nothing in the end." But since they interested him at least enough for him to be "amused by their performances," he came on that occasion to witness somewhat sceptically the precocious audacity that boldly undertook a work upon which the most cunning fiddlers of the time had broken their teeth. But at the first determined entry of the solo violin he pricked up his ears and as the movement went on he leant farther and farther over the edge of the box, as if to hear better. After the adagio he hastily and secretly wiped his eyes, and at the close he ran straight into the artists' room, where he embraced and kissed the little fellow, who had brought his own work near to him as hardly anyone had done before and who, instead of being proud of the storm of

applause, was quite distressed because the public had clapped in the middle of his first solo. "You should not have played it so beautifully," Brahms consoled him. The boy was Bronislaw Huberman.

The three violin Sonatas, which followed each other at short intervals, winged their way like three doves of peace to his resentful friend, who after the incident in the matter of his divorce still held angrily and implacably aloof, for even after the resumption of their relations he remained stiff and formal. But each time one of these compositions reached him, he forgot his bitterness for awhile and gave vent, at least verbally, to his delight in these intimate and very personal excerpts from a diary in sound. The last of them, Op. 108, in D minor, dedicated to Bülow, is played least frequently. It is like a portrait of the dedicatee in its restless excitement, with its feverish visions and scarcely relieved tensions, to which the lyric portions make, as it were, a provisional contrast and threaten to change from fantastic humour to the deepest solemnity, from agitated passion to serious contemplation. The second—the *Meistersinger* Sonata in A major—is the most alive with its enthralling and fierily noble song in the first movement and the enticing, deep-glowing, quietly ecstatic finale, in the impetuous, yet never jerky melody of which one seems to hear the dark contralto of Hermine Spies. The andante falls curiously out of the prevalent atmosphere with its two interludes which, in an oddly unexpected quotation, send a message to Grieg. But the best-beloved of the three is the first, the "Rain" Sonata in G major. An essay ought to be written on the rainy hours in Brahms's work, exposing to the reader that tender magic with which the sweetly monotonous trickling of summer showers captivated the master's mind: many a chamber-music movement and many of the songs, such as the rainbow-spanned *Abendregen* and the two on Klaus Groth's poems, make us feel that warmly veiled, cosily melancholy mood engendered by the lulling music of raindrops on the window panes through which a damp, glittering landscape is seen, the mood that lets us muse with such gentle sorrow on the past. Through this tender, contemplative and gracious Sonata flows the lovely, weary melody of the *Regenlied*: the rhythm of the soft rain thrumming against the

windows dominates the whole of the first and last movements, and it is as if he "had only just discovered that a quaver can be dotted," as Elisabeth von Herzogenberg remarks. The first, in a clear, pastoral $\frac{3}{4}$ time, runs on steadily in a kind of muted brightness; the last, into whose murmuring accompaniment the dotted quaver figure hammers softly but obstinately and whose melody is mild and relieving, incessantly lulling as a country rain in July, seems as if woven out of sunlight filtered through white mist. The full-toned andante, sung with the greatest fervour and manliness, like a choral thanksgiving, carries a dark, glowing colour into the silver-grey of the surrounding movements. It is all transparent and disembodied in a way rarely achieved by the master,—the gossamer of an Indian summer. He was not often so over-delicate.

A real reconciliation between the friends was achieved only by the double Concerto for violin and violoncello. It looks as if it had been written expressly for this purpose. The themes in themselves call neither for a solo violin nor for a solo cello, but might as well have served for an orchestral suite or for a symphonic rhapsody. The very tone in which Brahms writes about it to Joachim—the name of Jussuf is no longer used—is more solemn and important than was his wont on similar occasions. Instead of briefly mentioning the fact of the completion of the work and making further arrangements, he begins by approaching the "honoured friend" with circumstantial preliminary requests:—"I should like to give you news of an artistic nature in which I more or less heartily desire to interest you," he wrote, asking to be given a line in reply meanwhile. When Joachim answered at once, venturing some guesses at the nature of the new work and expressing his "true delight" with the last ones—the austere impassioned second cello Sonata, the A major violin Sonata and the extraordinarily concentrated, laconically grandiose piano Trio in C minor,—Brahms was able to make his "confession much more cheerfully" than he had hoped. And, having stated the fact of the existence of the new work, which he had again and again tried to dismiss from his mind, he said:—"Now I am indifferent to everything that concerns the matter except to the question of what you think of it." Let Joachim not be embarrassed:—"If you send me a postcard and simply write on it, 'I

make no claim,' I shall know all the rest, and more than enough. If not, I begin my questions." And now he started:—Score on approval? Possibility of a meeting for a trial by him and the cellist of his quartet, Hausmann? Any opportunity to perform it with an orchestra? "Please send me a line and remember that I repeat . . .—well, you may send the above postcard even after you have seen a specimen! I will not say openly and explicitly what I secretly hope and desire." Does one not feel with what trepidation this was written, and that it was less a question of the work than of the resumption of the pleasant old connexions? Is not the greater of the two seen to stand shyly, almost guiltily, before his friend, to whom he is anxious to pay the highest of compliments? This is a trait that explains many others in the portrait of Brahms.

The double Concerto did its duty and at last reconciled the two, which is the more remarkable because Joachim regarded this very work with no more than cool admiration. He was right, for it is one of Brahms's most unapproachable and joyless compositions. Only the andante flows fully and has the same firm stride and clear, strong melodic drift as the G minor piano Quartet which it resembles. The other themes are too short-winded, too dry, too introspective; something that is obstinate and mechanical drives the work into an artificial motion. After the imposing opening in mighty chordal cataracts, the music grows cold and rigid; even the bright passages wear a frozen smile, and the workings-out are like equations* without unknown quantities and not like parables,* for here is one of those creations by Brahms where inspiration seems replaced by mathematical construction and which truly speak only with the tongue of the classics' "heir." Only here and there does a little melodic bud timidly peep from between the cracks of a solid wall.

But the work carried out its mission and thus brought peace once more to the master's disturbed conscience. He very cordially thanked Joachim for the days he had spent at Clara Schumann's in Baden-Baden to try over the Concerto. About six months later he wrote to him, ambiguously, for he was bent on declining an alluring invitation to visit England:—"F.A.E.

* In the original the antithesis is reinforced by the use of two words derived from the same root:—*Gleichung* (equation) and *Gleichnis* (parable).—E.B.

has remained my symbol and I think that, in spite of all, I may bless it."

Brahms was fond of going for walks in the country on Sundays in the company of his friends and their wives. I should like to describe such a day, for during its course many sides of Brahms's nature were shown in little, as in a focal mirror.

I had made the master's acquaintance in the Brüll family at the beginning of the 'nineties and the first meeting has remained unforgettable, for it began with a display of his rudeness, though not addressed to me individually. Brahms had come to stay at the mountain farmstead near Unterach on the Attersee which the Brülls had bought, much to his annoyance, and where we spent many summers with them. Brahms had thus been deprived of the walks and talks with Ignaz Brüll at Ischl, to which he had been accustomed for years, and also of his attempts at French conversation, which it is true were soon given up again and about which Brüll still sighed to me long afterwards, while his wife declared that what the two had done had been to keep silence in French. Brahms gave vigorous expression to his displeasure at the removal to "Hinterach," as he called it, and steadfastly refused to inspect his friends' handsome property. In the end he came all the same, as the guest of Ignaz Brüll's uncle Eduard, an aristocratic, witty, intelligent and epicurean little old gentleman, who was an especial favourite of his. The company was seated on the terrace above while we young people walked below, enjoying the moonlight. Our hostess, who saw us, called out: "Children, why don't you come up here?" whereupon the master's creaking voice was heard to say: "Oh, throw them down a few pears, then perhaps they will stay where they are!" We did stay, even without any pears.

Shortly afterwards Brahms took notice of me in the friendliest manner, Ignaz Brüll having given him a small volume of poems of mine, which he thought "decent." Brüll, who knew that nothing could have given me greater pleasure, asked him whether he would not compose one of them; but he answered at once: "No, the verses are much too pretty." He did not mean, of course, that they were too good for him, but merely expressed the very just view—for the sake of which alone I mention the

incident—that a very euphonious and linguistically polished poetry left music too little scope and that less finished verses lend themselves better to composition because they stand in need of a complement. The collection of the *Brahms Texts* confirms this opinion. And since the poems in question, whose author has long withdrawn them from publicity, unfortunately had no other merit than that of clean rhyme and formally elegant verse, I had to forego the fulfilment of the intoxicating dream of being thus dragged into immortality by Johannes Brahms. But from that time onward he was extremely kind to me and he was pleased that a reproduction of *The Feast of Plato* by his admired Anselm Feuerbach, which he had presented to Brüll, stimulated me to write a little poem under the same title. I was asked now and again to take part in one of those Sunday excursions, and it is of a day like this that I have more to say.

It was a wonderful spring morning—in the year 1896, I think—and we walked from Schönbrunn to Rodaun. Brüll, Heuberger, Door and two or three other friends with their wives were present. Brahms kept ahead of everybody, bareheaded and walking quickly, halting now and again to say a good-humoured word or two. In the park of Schönbrunn someone said:—"It is here or in the Prater that your monument ought to stand one day, doctor." Whereupon he began to inveigh violently against the mania of erecting monuments in general, adding the personal observation that the thought of a statue could be made tolerable for him and even give him pleasure only on condition that it were realized solely from the proceeds of his work after the expiration of the legal term of copyright. For that, he said, would prove that his music had enough vitality to deserve such commemoration.

We went on, and Brahms remained near the ladies. Suddenly his eyes began to beam and he seemed to listen into himself, as if a great inspiration had been vouchsafed him. It could not be otherwise, for he turned away and continued his walk at a distance from the others. Only towards the end of the excursion, when we entered the pale-green, budding woods, did he join us again. He was now in the gayest of moods and urged everyone to the table with childish jests, exhorted Brüll's sister, who had upset the salt-cellar, to pour red wine upon it without delay, and persistently asked the young waitress, who wished to know whether

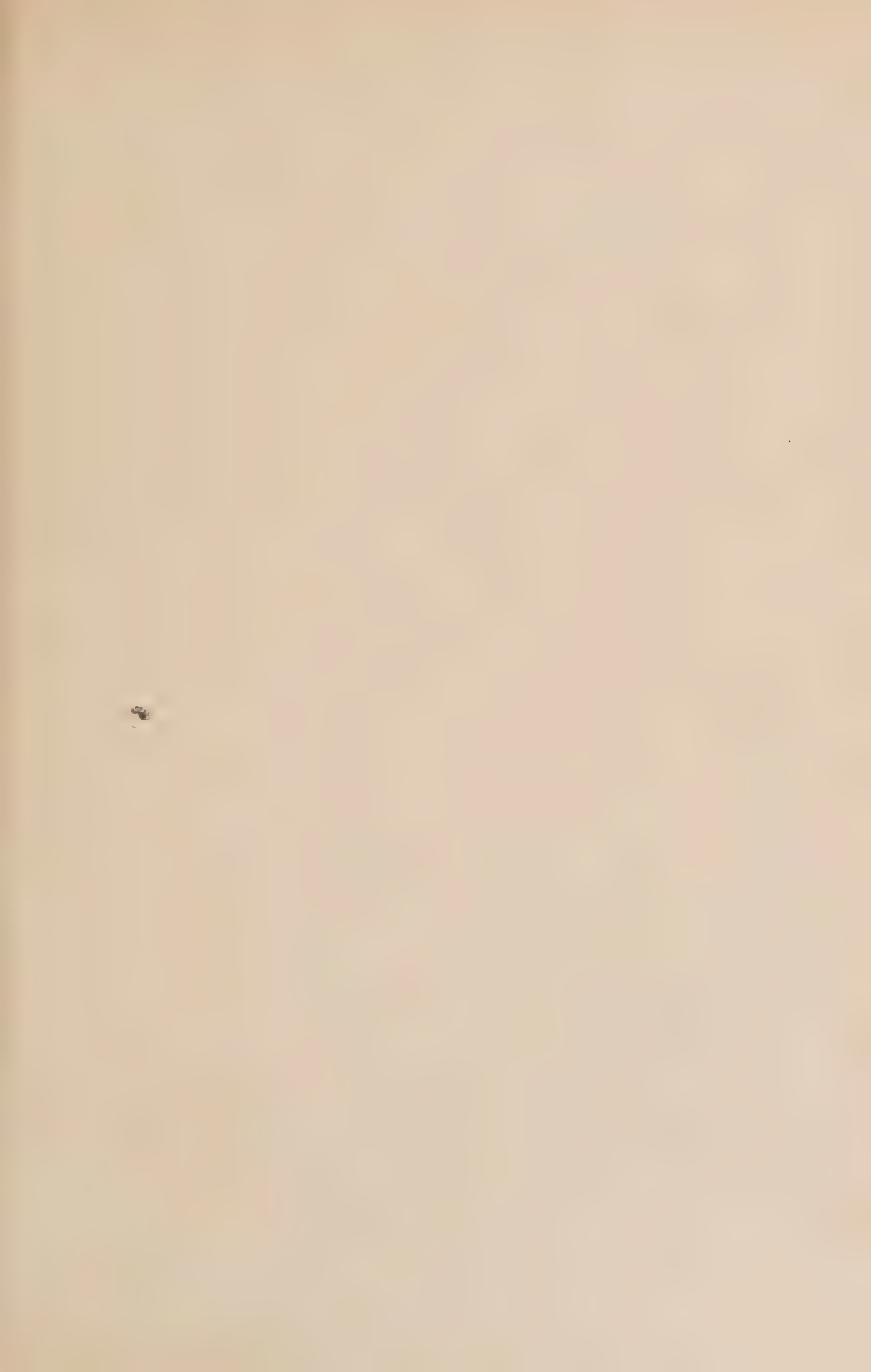
he would like some farinaceous dish, to bring him a *Sang an Aegir* (the composition of which by William II. had just appeared). Having laughed at her perplexed expression, he explained: "A *Kaiserschmarren* * is what I want." When she brought it, he paid his addresses to her so impetuously that everyone teased him until he said that so fresh, healthy and pretty a girl always made him feel that life was worth living. Somebody then exclaimed:—"It is not too late yet for you to get married, you know, doctor!" But he became very serious all of a sudden and, staring straight before him, only said:—"I could *not* marry now. Believe me, I could not help despising a girl for taking me for a husband. Surely you are not going to persuade me that anybody could fall in love with me, as I am now?" And when I answered with great alacrity that I was certain that he was mistaken and that I knew at least two splendid girls who would be ready to marry him at once and to love him, he replied savagely:—"That is not true! I don't believe it! And what else could attract them? My money? My art? To be accepted out of admiration—no, then I might as well send her my things and stay at home myself, for at the most she would be in love with my music." To which he added, very violently, as if to forbid any contradiction:—"No, no, it is impossible. I should *have* to despise her."

From that moment he remained taciturn and only recovered his spirits on our way back, when he saw a few poorly clad children look longingly into a confectioner's shop-window in one of the suburbs and took them inside to buy them what they desired. The happy radiance in the children's eyes made him glad again. But he had few words for us to the end of the day. It was as if a wound had been torn open, a wound that had not healed and never was to heal. On that Sunday it bled anew.

A little while ago I mentioned the name of Anselm Feuerbach, the artist who next to Gottfried Keller and Adolf Menzel was of all contemporaries the closest to Brahms in artistic and mental affinity. The composer took a passionate interest in his work that was rare in him and cared for Feuerbach personally with—let us

* A popular Viennese egg dish; but *Schmarren* is also used for "trash." If I dared translate even more freely than I feel compelled to do already, I might have interpreted Brahms's order of *Kaiserschmarren* by "Imperial tripe."—E.B.

say—an amicable sympathy, for it was a case of prolonging the state that precedes friendship rather than of friendship itself: it never came to a real fraternity between these two great men. Feuerbach, for all his outward impassibility, was as susceptible as Brahms was unreserved, which is saying a good deal. He took offence because Brahms had warned him not to remove to Vienna for good and had from the first discouraged him by a frank description of the city's artistic life; and he was even more annoyed when he found that the master had been right. For the latter had known very well what he was doing when he painted him the conditions and the disposition of the capital he himself greatly liked in the forcible and glaring colours of another painter, Hans Makart, and not in the more tempered ones of the creator of the *Iphigeneia* himself. He knew that a man so sensitive and predisposed to suffering as Feuerbach was not made to stand up against the faithless pleasantness of the Viennese, against their habit of jestingly defeating all that is new and unaccustomed, their luxurious negligence that kills like a blight, the envy and hostility with which the alliance of the lazy and the mediocre ever confront a man of serious aim and extraordinary achievement because he makes them display their stupidity and become conscious of his contempt. Their passive amiability and unfailing readiness to smile, which hides a great deal of treachery behind an air of friendliness, is always prepared to turn the things which another takes seriously first into a hunt and then into a sport of baiting. The Viennese Feuerbach baiting takes its place worthily beside similar diversions which have made the Austrian capital so doubtfully famous: the Waldmüller baiting, the Bruckner baiting, the Hugo Wolf baiting, the Klimt baiting, the Mahler baiting. It seems as if this city, upon which the Spanish Hapsburgs have left their bloody traces and which had much to spare for Hispanic court ceremonial, finds its substitute for the bull-fights of the South in the *corrida* against great artists. That in the eyes of posterity the *toreros* exchange their parts for those of the *toros* does not appear to trouble her. It did not trouble her in the case of Anselm Feuerbach, whose wonderful *Legacy* voices the bitter complaint of a great painter hedged in and pursued like game by the spiteful arrogance of professors, by foolish superciliousness, anonymous perfidy and malevolent envy, and who





BRAHMS ON HIS WAY TO "THE RED HEDGEHOG"
Silhouette by Otto Böhrer

was much too proud to confess his pain when each morning he found a pack of sneering letters, unappreciative newspaper articles and miserably witless caricatures on his breakfast table. He was merely indignant at finding that people could be so uncommonly, or rather so commonly, limited. But he was just as inaccessible to the solicitous remonstrances of friendship, and deaf to dissuasions. What is more, he took them amiss. Brahms, who had positively fallen in love with Feuerbach's ideally handsome, fair-haired head,—he had ever been irresistibly attracted by a noble face and a sonorous voice,—and who was by nature so much like him that each of the maxims laid down by Feuerbach in his *Legacy* might just as well have been formulated by himself, did not for all that succeed in establishing a perfectly unconstrained and trusting friendship with him. Perhaps Brahms too was sometimes reticent because he disliked the uniform pleasantness which the painter cultivated with the elect and the worthless alike; such universal affability struck him as sycophantic, as a kind of betrayal of those whom Feuerbach professed to like. He went to see him frequently, endeavouring to give him a keener psychological insight and to exhort him to caution in his dealings with influential people. But he failed, just as he did in his tactful warning to Feuerbach not to exhibit *The Battle of the Amazons*, which had left him cold and actually proved one of the painter's decisive failures. Feuerbach had at that time a portrait of Brahms in hand, for he had succeeded in persuading the master to undergo the fatiguing tedium of the necessary sittings, which he had not only denied all the others, but averted with every available ruse. But when Brahms very considerably and tentatively advised him not to expose himself with this colossal canvas and not again to unchain the fury of the ignorant and narrow-minded, the only reply the painter made was to take the unfinished portrait off the easel and to lean it against the wall upside down. He never resumed it, and we are thus deprived of what would have been the most impressive likeness of the master. Neither Michalek nor Unger really captured him in their etchings; he is too trim on the one and too melancholy on the other. How much Brahms cared for this touchy friend the *Nänie* tells us in every bar. Another proof of it is his fondness for Julius Allgeyer, the excellent etcher, photographer and art critic who was Feuerbach's

friend and became his sympathetic biographer and was himself a kind of "legacy" of one who succumbed all too soon to his disillusion. Brahms always spoilt Allgeyer with marks of his watchful affection, as if he desired to do all the kindness to the dead man's friend which he would so gladly have lavished on Feuerbach himself.

The almost morbid disinclination to speak of his own works while they were in the making will be better understood and appreciated if it is realized what crises and convulsions gave birth to a new work by Brahms. Of his hunts for ideas during his solitary walks I have already spoken: he might be espied in the small hours of the morning walking in the Prater, with short steps, his hat in hands clasped behind his back, his glance resting far away; he would cross the meadows blind and deaf to all around him, growling, grunting, groaning, much as he was wont to do, audible as far as the tenth row of listeners, when he played the piano in public. Max Kalbeck saw him even more rapt and fired by inspiration at Ischl, a picture of one demented and spurred on by the spirit that possessed him which tells us so much of this "cool" master that it may be reproduced here in words of the unsuspected involuntary observer:—"An early riser and lover of nature like himself, I went out in the small hours of a warm July morning. Suddenly I saw a man, whom I took for a peasant, running towards me across the meadow from the woods. I was afraid that I might be trespassing and already pictured to myself a variety of unpleasant contingencies, when to my joy I found that the supposed peasant was my friend Brahms. But what a state was he in? What did he look like? Bareheaded and in shirtsleeves, without waistcoat or collar, he waved his hat in one hand and with the other dragged his coat after him along the grass, running so fast that one would have said he was escaping from an unseen pursuer. Long before he came near me I heard him pant and groan. When he approached, I saw perspiration streaming down his flushed cheek off his hair, which hung down into his face. His eyes stared straight in front of him into the void and gleamed like those of a wild animal. He gave me the impression of one possessed. Before I had recovered from my shock, he had rushed past me, so closely that we almost touched

each other, and I understood at once that it would be injudicious to address him, for he was glowing in a creative fire. Never shall I forget the awe with which this manifestation of such elemental force struck me."

This sacred frenzy of the creative man in the hour of his possession by the higher powers of music is as characteristic of Brahms and as aweing as his unfathomable emotions during the actual process of work. Again it was Kalbeck who was granted the happiness of witnessing an instance of the latter kind. "During a morning visit to the Salzburgerstrasse (where the master's Ischl lodgings were), I was on the point of entering the wide-open front door, when I noticed that the door of the music room was likewise open. From it came the sounds of such enchanting piano playing that I stood rooted to the threshold. It sounded like a free improvisation, but from some frequently repeated alterations of certain passages I concluded that Brahms was going through a new composition already finished in his head, in order to improve and polish it. . . . The treat would have been unique, greater even than my interest in the progress of his work, had not the solo changed into the queerest of duets. The richer the composition grew and the more impassioned the playing became, the more were my ears assailed by the strangest growling, whining and moaning, which at the height of the musical climax changed into a loud howling. Had Brahms, quite contrary to his inclination, got a dog? If so, it seemed to me incomprehensible that he should tolerate the accursed beast in his room. Half an hour or so later the playing ceased, and with it the howling. I heard the piano stool move and entered the room. There was no trace of a dog. Brahms looked a little embarrassed and wiped his eyes with the back of his hand like a child who is ashamed: he must have wept violently, for teardrops hung in his beard and his voice sounded soft and unsteady. . . . Soon afterwards he was heartily cheerful again and in a jesting mood." Had Brahms discovered that chance had brought him a hearer, who had detected him in what he kept most secret, there would certainly have been a rupture between the two. The musician can bear less than any other artist to be exposed to a witness while he is carried away by inspiration, however close the bond may be that holds them together, and Brahms was least of all made to suffer

it. He was in such things very much like Beethoven, who would give notice to his landlord if he found somebody listening at the door of his lodgings, and like Gustav Mahler, who was beside himself at the mere thought of being overheard while he composed, and who once said:—"Are you not capable of understanding how disturbing this is and how it makes creation impossible? How indiscreet and indelicate, how wounding to every feeling of shame, to surrender to the ears of strangers something that is still in the process of making. It is as if one were to show the world a babe still in the mother's womb." But those who knew Kalbeck are aware that he was the last man to be reproached with indelicacy and that he can have had no after-thought in the innocent enjoyment of his experience, least of all that of committing a sacrilege where his beloved master was concerned. It must have been in such convulsions of the soul that Brahms created songs like the *Four Serious Songs*, his chamber music and his choral pieces; not, however, the double Concerto, nor the final movements of the F minor Quintet and the C minor Quartet, which lead from a flaming red and yellow autumn forest straight into the class-room of the school of counterpoint.

Who does not feel in all these contradictions the inner conflict, the furious tensions of the creative act, the relieving tears, the oppressive sense of responsibility felt in the contemplation of what seemed ever insufficient, expressed in the nature and the music of a master the fire of whose energy could never burn away all the earthly dross from music which he imagined in a pristine purity and wished to betray none of his human emotions? The passion of his soul did not abate in the course of time; in fact, the creator of the clarinet Quintet and of the last songs appears to be younger than the composer of the Variations, the Serenades and the Magelone Romances. Yet outwardly he became more balanced: in his sixties he seemed irradiated by a soft glow, the glow of an hour before sunrise. His relations with his friends were peaceful and lovingly indulgent; those sudden disturbances no longer occurred. Only one of them he gave up, and one of the most faithful. He found fault with Hermann Levi for having so irretrievably succumbed to the temptations of Wagner, and when this gentle and sensitive man defended himself with reasons

that must be regarded as sound and yet strike one as forced, Brahms merely said, in an offensively disdainful tone:—"Well, of course, you are Royal Bavarian Court Conductor!" Levi kept silent, greatly hurt, as well he might be, for he never adjusted his views for commercial reasons and never made them dependent upon an appointment. His correspondence concerning his conducting of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth shows how tender his conscience was.* Brahms left the next morning and the two never saw each other again.

His relations with the human being who was dearest to him, Clara Schumann, were once more grievously threatened. Brahms who possessed the manuscript of Schumann's D minor Symphony in the first version, which seemed to him incomparably more delightful, transparent and euphonious than the awkwardly rescored (published) second version, was anxious to restore this endearing work by its publication in the original form. But he misconstrued a phrase of Clara's into an expression of consent, and a vexing correspondence ensued. Clara Schumann did not scruple to accuse the truest of friends and most honest of men of ambiguity, if not of dishonesty, and Brahms, stung to the quick and feeling that his best intentions had been misinterpreted, wrote her a letter of farewell the manly and dignified tone of which shows his lasting and indestructible devotion as clearly as his firm resolve to put an end to his intercourse with so unjust, pettily resentful and insulting a friend. But the two people who were united to the very core of their hearts could not endure this state of things for long: Clara saw that she had been unjust and in time the bonds which had been so senselessly severed grew together again. A mild autumnal light settled on Brahms's connexion with Clara. She, it is true, sighed now and again after a word coming as straight from the heart as his music, but above all the small discords she felt the permanence of his unchangeable love and attachment. He rejoiced with her whenever her art or her family life brought her satisfaction; he suffered with her, who had to endure not only the fate of Andromache, but the more dire one of Niobe, for she lost one son after another and each in a more terrible way than the last; he stayed with her and consoled her when his godchild, Felix, whom he was often obliged to rebuke for his

* Levi was a Jew and his scruples were of a religious nature.—E.B.

unseemly treatment of his mother, died of pulmonary consumption while the elder brother, Ferdinand, slowly fell a victim to disease and was dragged from one sanatorium to another. He took part in the publication of the complete Schumann edition with a greater zeal than he had ever mustered for his own work, assisted Clara in the volumes entrusted to her editorship as well, and unselfishly did much anonymous and often ungratefully received work. The edition as it stands and the principles of which he gave it the benefit, which may be judged from his detailed correspondence with Clara and with the firm of Breitkopf & Härtel, for which he afterwards undertook a no less scrupulously prepared edition of Chopin, should serve as a model for any complete edition of the works of Johannes Brahms himself. For a new edition of Mozart's *Requiem* we are also indebted to his faithful industry. His short prefatory account is a model of its kind and the result of weeks of comparative study; it settles the question of what is Mozart in the work and what Süssmayr, and is so unchallengeable that it must be once and for all regarded as the final solution of a point much disputed until then. Where the intuition of a creative genius is joined to exhaustive knowledge, loving care and a clear understanding of manuscripts, as in the case of Brahms, the outcome must needs be more important and decisive than that of any future scientific research.

Outwardly Brahms had grown calm. What his solitude might still hold of stormily tearful hours, of feverish dreams and creative deliriums, of evocations of the past, of battles against himself and against treacherously alluring voices, is nobody else's concern: he wore a mask of quiet content and became more and more difficult to fathom. Only some passages in his letters or in his music let those who were devoted to him guess how laboriously he disguised what went on within him. He no longer sought to justify himself in the face of reproaches that would have maddened him earlier in life, and he had but a shrug of the shoulder for any sort of misunderstanding. Only now and again did a sigh escape him over the lack of understanding he found even among the closest comrades of his youth. He forgot that the fault was in some measure that of his own abruptness. The peculiarities of his utterances, both verbal and in writing, became increasingly noticeable: singular and covertly personal phrases of his, thrown

out with apparent negligence would at first pass one by, only to return to the memory later, at first gently questioning and then urgently demanding an answer,—an answer which, when found, would generally prove a lasting spiritual possession. An example may here be given without comment for the reader to think out:—“Yes, there are lengths in Schubert, but they are all to be found on the first page.” He rarely gave his own developed thoughts otherwise than in such cryptic forms, for he asked, in his words as in his music, a fine and affectionately listening ear of those to whom he had something to say and whose comprehension he liked to put to the proof.

Invitations to accept permanent conductor's appointments, which still continued to reach him, he declined more and more decisively, as in the case of the offers from Düsseldorf and Cologne, though many letters passed to and fro. His refusals are more easily understood than the fact that they were never made until he had debated with himself for some considerable time. This is the more remarkable because he was long past any need of a competence and conducting as such had never greatly attracted him. Perhaps he was tempted by the opportunities to educate the public to appreciate great music, and especially that of his two gods, Bach and Handel. One inclines the more to this view because the determining reason for his refusal was always his suspicion that the artistic means at his disposal would not satisfy his demands, for here this least exacting of musicians made great claims. Where his art was concerned, nothing was good enough for him, and from his youth he was faithful to an ideal of perfection. How brightly it still glowed in the later years may be felt in certain portions of his ever more concise, taciturn, spare and clear works, which hide a secret in their crystal centre; it shows itself also in the towering rage that could take hold of this guardian of the sublime, the faithful Eckart of German music, when some bungler or another misused the sacred name of the art for his own worthless purpose, and particularly when one dared to lay hands upon a masterpiece and distort it in the interests of the music he hung on to it. I will quote a passage of the letter he wrote to Hans von Bülow after the performance of a *Faust* by the worthy choirmaster and part-song composer

Heinrich Zöllner, to show how in these latter days his temperament could overflow as readily as in his youth and what vigorous berserker blows he could deal on such occasions. "From Cologne," he says, "comes, by the way, the most revolting novelty imaginable: Zöllner's *Faust*. I can find no words for it,* but I shall henceforth say nothing more against Gounod and Boito. A boy may put the tragedies of Sophocles and Shakespeare on his piano desk and strum and howl his enthusiasm to the heavens. But I treated it as a sin, a crime, when one day a young man brought me the score of the prison scene, which he had set to music. It seemed to me like damaging evidence against him as man and artist. If an uneducated and crazy fellow like Bruckner did it, well and good. But here is an orderly, well-brought-up man who thinks over it and works at it for years and sits down every day to desecrate a sanctuary. This is not ridiculous, it is disgusting and quite unpardonable."

The master's whole hostile injustice is shown in this entirely uncalled-for and acrimonious attack on Bruckner. That composer, certainly, was as little "educated" as he was crazy, and the reverence for all that is great which animated the retired, childlike and deeply religious man would have saved him from an outrage of this kind, had not his pure artistic instinct done so of itself. For all that, such a holy flaring up and vigorous hitting out commands a respect that is not to be tempered by an occasional error. Every injury done to a great poetical work roused his indignation. He was furious about Massenet's "confectioner's music" to a childishly watered-down version of Goethe's *Werther*, and he resented the fact that Max Kalbeck undertook the translation of opera librettos of this kind, because a critic, he thought, ought not to identify himself with such trash. Thus, even in his ripe years, could the "frosty" and "apathetic" Brahms boil over.

No less heated are those among the later works which we owe to his ecstasies of inspiration, to his inner urge, and not to a mere deliberate desire to attempt a formal succession of Bach. Did compositions like the Motets, widely admired as they are, really proceed from impulse, or were they merely the product of a

* He can, all the same : once more his language is not to be rendered in the decorous English tongue.—E.B.

desire to prove superior artistry? How gloriously Brahms could set biblical words to music is seen in the *Four Serious Songs* and the *German Requiem*; then why these problems instead of unconstrained singing straight from the soul, why the well-accomplished complications of all manner of unexampled technical feats, why mathematic-acoustic physics instead of metaphysics, why—let us not be polite, but say it with Brahmsian bluntness—tedium instead of vitality? But, it is true, in that case they would not have been Motets, and it appears that he had to write Motets to give the musical academies material for the profoundest researches into the mysteries of complex counterpoint and formal conjuring, to be studied while the sun shines outside. His music at times gives the impression of a flagellant's penitence.

The works of his last years seem more and more like a refuge taken in the past, even when they try to grow new shoots and sing with young, almost unbearably touching voices. This is true not only of his now perfect mastery of old forms and their subjection to modern content: it is true of the music's very nature. The present with all its confusion, its insistence on a renewal of life and art, now sounded to him only like a far-off noise in the room filled with old-fashioned furniture where in his solitude he retained his hold upon the world. Beloved shadows arose and he held them fast with magic signs, thus imparting to all these works something that was ageless already while their creator was still alive. Here and there, in the *Zigeunerlieder* or the clarinet Quintet, a bright, singeing flame still shoots up. In the songs, in the chamber music and in the piano pieces we overhear him telling himself the fairy-tale of his life and making himself a keepsake that recalls the springtime of his years.

One offer of an appointment as conductor, made three years before his death, filled him with greater satisfaction than any other, though his joy was not without bitterness and regret. The suggestion came from Hamburg, shamefully late, that he should direct the Philharmonic concerts there, a post he had once so ardently desired that he left his birthplace deeply mortified and for ever after he had been passed over a second time. He never got over it, and even now, in his letter of refusal dated April 27, 1894, addressed to Senator Scheumann, the hurt he had repressed

for years made itself felt. One can almost see the pen trembling in his hand and feel the burning of a wound that had never healed on reading these words:—"There are not many things I so long and so fervently desired at one time—that is, at the right time! It was long before I became accustomed to the thought of having to go another way. Had my wish been realized, I should probably celebrate a jubilee in your midst; you, however, would still find it necessary, as you do to-day, to look out for a younger and more capable man. May you find him, and may he prove as willing, as passably talented and as heartily devoted to his task as would have been, Your most respectful and faithful, J. Brahms." Fate knew better than he why his fond desire was to remain unfulfilled: he had to live without office, wifeless and homeless, that he might carry out his mission without flinching. Once again—and perhaps more symbolically than ever in this belated beckoning of a long-buried hope—are we given a glimpse of the ordainment that ruled this life and shaped it into an exceptional career.

Two great joys were to come to him at two musical festivals, little as he cared in general for such wholesale treats where the music was as a rule chosen by partisans of this or that movement. He visited them less from curiosity in questionable novelties than a desire for the stimulating company of fellow-musicians. But it was otherwise with the festival held at Meiningen in 1895 and with the opening of the new *Tonhalle* at Zürich, which he shortly afterwards celebrated with a performance of the *Song of Triumph*, conducted by himself. It was for once no question of a competition between contemporary composers: here, and still more at Meiningen, it was a glorification of the master. He was crowned with the same laurels as the great ones in whose footsteps he follows as one of the worthiest successors. During the five concerts of the three Meiningen festival days works by Bach, Beethoven and Brahms only were to be heard. Fritz Steinbach, entered into Bülow's heritage, for the first time proclaimed the gospel of the "three B's" in its full significance. The *Song of Triumph*, the C minor Symphony, chamber music and vocal quartets maintained themselves victoriously side by side with the Matthew Passion, the *Missa Solemnis*, Bach Cantatas, and Quar-

tets and concert works by Beethoven, in performances which Brahms, full of pleasurable excitement, recognized as perfect interpretations. To his intense satisfaction he was surrounded and enthusiastically acclaimed during these festive days, not only in the concert room, but wherever his leonine, youthfully forceful and at the same time venerable figure was seen in the streets. It was given to him to feel that sincere affection for and public recognition of a creator of imperishable works which hardly knows where to find enough tokens of reverence. The people made him the recipient of all the gratitude they wished to shower on the head of the great masters' living representative, whose works, next to theirs, did not seem to them altogether inferior.

A pleasure of another kind was the discovery that the art of great interpretation at least showed promise of a vigorous young succession. Although among the new composers only the lad Ernö Dohnanyi seemed to him remarkable by the expectations he aroused with a piano Quintet which fruitfully emulated and yet not slavishly imitated the Brahmsian manner—expectations which were not to be fulfilled—the master must have been pleasantly reassured to find that those traditions of a living style of which his own works stood in need were certain of an adequate aftergrowth. Joachim's fiddle, which during those bright days resounded in the full majesty of his younger years, would be in the good hands of little Huberman one day; Bülow's subtle art of conducting, which infused blood into each bar and made every work transparent, was taken up by Fritz Steinbach, who had perhaps a smaller mentality but a bigger heart; Brahms himself, as a pianist, had a valiant disciple in Eugene d'Albert, who combined the dazzling brilliance of Liszt with Brahms's own grip. D'Albert's comprehensive genius and stupendous technique made him precisely the interpreter required by the fullness and the volcanic fire of Brahms's piano music, and the master was happy to have found a follower who seemed appointed to take up his mission and to carry it on according to his own ideas. His pleasure, it is true, would have been somewhat damped if he had lived to know the kinematic operas of this all too facile musician, who has aimed heedlessly at blatant effects. As it was, the only thing Brahms disapproved of was the frequent change in his matrimonial affairs. When someone proposed to introduce him

to one of d'Albert's wives,—the third or fourth, I think,—he declined with the words:—"I'll skip that one!" It was at the memorable concert in the Leipzig Gewandhaus, where Eugene d'Albert performed the tremendous feat of playing the master's two gigantic piano Concertos, that Brahms wielded the conductor's baton for the last time in his life.

The overwhelming homage that had been done him at Meiningen had a vivifying effect upon him, which he still felt when, a month later, after a short visit to Clara Schumann at Frankfort, he arrived at Zürich by way of Vienna. He overflowed with good humour there. His *Song of Triumph*, which preceded Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, conducted by Friederich Hegar, at the inauguration of the *Tonhalle*, made the strongest of impressions even upon himself. Quite contrary to his habit, he drew Widmann's attention to various details in the work, especially to the close, where the chorus, he said, "rings a peal of victory with all the bells." He was much elated at the fact that one of his works had opened the ball at the new concert hall. From Vienna he wrote a few lines to Hegar, at whose house in Zürich he stayed afterwards and kindled everybody with the inward glow that animated him. His letter betrays his modest pride:—"My work," it says, "thanks you for this great honour of being allowed to usher in music at your new hall and of being followed by other and more beautiful works." But the height of his triumph came when he stepped up on the rostrum and found that the ceiling of the fine new building was decorated with the heads of all the great masters of music, among whom he saw his own likeness look down upon him. He who always liked to call himself "a poor composer of the lowest class" knew now, and knew it not only from this portrait medallion, that he was one of the elect, and that his life's work had not been done in vain.

He knew it now: he had done a good day's work. His labour would stand indestructible and he had grown the wings of immortality. It was a feeling that mellowed him and made him gentle. He could now put his house in order.

XVIII

LAST INTERLUDE OF THE WORKS

THE chamber music goes to the heart. Though one may have looked in cool detachment upon this or that work by one who matured more and more gloriously towards the purest perfection, the hearing of any of his chamber works touches one's soul at the first bar. The listener is a human being here and may admit it without constraint, for Brahms is human himself. There are isolated movements, to be sure, whose themes wear spectacles and seem to look at us with the peevish and inflamed eyes of a scientist. But these are few and the others blossom and sing: all that is good and inspirited and lovable in him forces itself to the light. The two piano Trios with strings and that with clarinet, the two string Quintets and the clarinet Quintet show, certainly, that the young Brahms was a more impetuous, almost terrifying genius in his romantic wildness, but they also reveal a force and clarity, a manly charm he did not before possess. In his youth he had neither this daylight brightness in his wakeful hours nor these star-illuminated dreams.

But I must revert somewhat and say a few words about two chamber works already finished at the close of the 'sixties, but to my mind akin by nature to the later rather than to the earlier group. One is the *Werther* Quartet in C minor, with piano. Brahms carried it with him for nearly two decades, perhaps from a certain reluctance to surrender this musical reflexion of his most desolate feelings to an indifferent world rather than from any disbelief in its gloomy beauty. The first three movements are among the strongest and most moving things ever written by him. The first appeals at once by its brooding opening into which the angry blows of a relentless fate fall, and still more by that archangels' song of the second subject, which descends from the luminous heights of Heaven and is deliciously dissolved in

scattered quavers plucked by the cello while the treble sings on and the rhythm of Mime's forging hammer once again brings Brahms unawares into contact with Wagner. A more wonderfully touching song than the endless, sorrow-steeped E major melody of the adagio Brahms has seldom given us. This farewell to Clara, to which I have already referred, won the heart of Elisabeth von Herzogenberg. And the scherzo, pouncing upon the ear with a panther's leap, with its violently accentuated, clutching chords in $\frac{6}{8}$ motion and the serious, hopeful chant of its trio, has the true Brahmsian turbulence. The finale alone falls off. It is ingenious, but emotion is left unsatisfied by its hasty, shadowy straying after the traces of a theme by Mendelssohn (C minor Trio) and by the weak pretence of a grim humour that seeks to animate this movement; it might be another of Brahms's "rain" pieces—one spelling a mood of uniform dreariness. Nor does the withered chorale heard during its course blossom forth afresh. The striking turn in the working-out that recalls the principal theme of Beethoven's C minor Symphony is doubtless one of those allusions of which Brahms was so fond; but it is no longer fate that knocks at the door,—only a spectral remembrance. And the two crashing final chords really do conclude all this dismal gliding and drizzling like pistol shots.

The other work in question is the string Quartet in B flat major, dedicated to Brahms's Utrecht friend, Professor Engelmann. I must confess that it is among the works to which I have never formed a true attachment. I am in fact incapable of understanding the preference given to it by the public at the expense of more revealing and inspired chamber works by the master. The rattling $\frac{6}{8}$ theme in the first movement always makes me think of someone on a railway journey who is haunted by the Gavotte of King Louis and hears its rhythm confused by the clattering of the wheels, unable to get it out of his head. The pastoral continuation and the auxiliary theme in the style of a *thème russe* as used by the later Beethoven are equally indifferent. The canzona of the andante, with the contrast of its second subject, or rather its intermediary subject, which has precipitate beats of dotted quavers like barbed hooks, is very beautiful in its simple song form and its noble melodic flow, but the beauty somehow seems a little past its prime and helped out by cosmetics. The agitato

that takes the place of a scherzo, a movement especially loved by Brahms, also seems to have faint wrinkles round its eyes: the master elsewhere said similar things with a less artificial excitement than he did in these syncopated obstinacies and in the faded dance melody of the middle section. The final variations on a folk-like theme have a certain cold charm. Their best point comes at the close, where the last variant discloses the principal theme of the first movement, and one wonders whether the theme was invented first or whether it was originated by the variations and only afterwards shaped into the initial section. Thus the Quartet is at least of importance as an object of speculation on Brahms's structural procedure.

Two things strike one in the later chamber works. Firstly, that here again a serial law seemed to govern the composer, for most of these works appear in pairs—though generally unequal pairs—or in groups of three. The C major Trio and the F major Quintet immediately follow each other (Op. 87 and Op. 88), and a contemporary Trio in E flat major was rejected in spite of Bülow's and Clara Schumann's delight in it; the G major Quintet (Op. 111) is joined after a short interval by the Trio and Quintet with clarinet parts (Op. 114 and Op. 115), and to the latter succeed the two clarinet Sonatas (Op. 120). Secondly, the relationship between size and content becomes inverted. The works grow visibly more concise, concentrated, reduced to the essence of music; what they contain grows weightier, purer, purged of all dross. They are on the average shorter than the earlier chamber works by more than a third. I propose to emulate them in my description.

The C major Trio is one of the least frequently played works by Brahms and apparently one of the least pleasing. But although distant and thankless at first, it reveals itself as especially attractive after repeated hearings. Its sharp outlines make it one of the clearest and most decisive works he ever produced, and from movement to movement it rises to higher regions. The first opens with a tense thematic phrase that afterwards develops so laboriously that it can hardly be called a real subject, in spite of its forceful beginning; but, as Brahms once wrote to someone:—"for no letter this one will be long enough," for no theme this one

has sufficient striking power, plasticity and germinative potentiality. The other three movements are very different. The second, in the Brahmsian *chiaroscuro*, has a kind of shamefaced melodic fervour that evaporates directly you listen attentively. The third, with its downward-gliding triplet figure and its halting chromaticism, seems of a sudden to throw off its grey cloak and to stand before us in bright armour, merrily dealing out blows. The fourth flutters prettily and anxiously, like a swallow that tries to say that it is time for nesting. But before it comes to that, the themes become involved in many adventures. Brahms is at his best—though not at his warmest—where the second subject grows imposingly compact and throws itself into the battle, and more especially at the point where the broadly augmented principal subject, now shaped into oneness, stalks on as with head erect and the piano becomes a softly rolling drum and a harp that purls on in broken and alternating chords, a passage which afterwards becomes the coda of the movement. The andante with variations is a blood relation of the similar movement in the B flat major Sextet from the moment it begins the measured motion of its theme with those recalcitrant syncopations on the weak beat, which give it something of a Magyar character. The scherzo is an intimate piece of piquant fancy, the figment of a Queen Mab of the Austrian mountains: it buzzes and whizzes and scatters itself like an angry swarm of bees and has a firm and confident C major melody in its trio, a tune of Lutheran strength and faith. The direction *allegro giocoso* looks odd in the finale; it is a rather ghostly mirth that fills this movement. The principal subject that rears itself up like a giant snake at the beginning and is afterwards reduced to pale, gliding triplets and flickering, detached string quavers, can at most suggest the gambols of a spectral drinking bout at midnight, though at the close it reveals itself as a sturdy and noisy Brahmsian gathering at the “Red Hedgehog,” who himself humorously ruffles his spines the while. (It must be left undecided whether the single allusion to the opening of the first movement, in the viola at letter B, is contrived or accidental.) The Trio is one of the compositions in which Brahms strives to make a personal confession; but he wishes it to remain untouched by the mob, whom he repels by sharp corners and edges, and here and there by obscurities; these,



CLARA SCHUMANN IN OLD AGE



however, are soon elucidated by those who listen with true affection.

The F major Quintet for strings is like the meadows at Ischl in the sunshine. In the very first bars of the joyous, cordial and simple main theme this pleasant landscape seems to lie open to our gaze. It might be, as Brahms jestingly said, by Ignaz Brüll, on whose betrothal this carefree movement was intended as a congratulation. But in the deeply serious, sorrowfully ardent song of the adagio reproachful memory makes itself heard; its two interludes, the second of which varies the *siciliano* melody of the first into a merrily skipping, fidgeting presto, take the place of a scherzo; then the funeral song of lost hope resounds again, to finish with an unsatisfying half-close on the dominant. These sounds from the depths of the heart overcame the composer against his will:—here I stand, let music help me, I cannot do otherwise.* But he often willed otherwise, with unfortunate results: the vigorous fugato of the finale into which a theme hewn out of the quaver motion in $\frac{3}{2}$ time is wedged, no longer speaks of emotion, but only of the composer's pleasure in a contrapuntal feat which, by the way, is already apparent in the first movement, though there it is overgrown by a lovely thematic blossoming. And it is curious to note how a gloriously unfolded, dark-red melodic bud like that of the second subject wearily sheds its petals after only four bars, as is often the case with Brahms's most enchanting inventions. It is possible, and it would be very like Brahms, that he intended this severe movement, whose tower walls, it is true, are crowned by an airy gable and overgrown by green melodic tendrils, to convey to the "young" bridegroom a song of felicitation and an exhortation not to be content with warbling like a singing-bird, but to strengthen his own music by a solid foundation of workmanship in the manner of Bach. But the preceding sections, which transported even his venomous opponent Hugo Wolf into a state of unresisting delight, effect a *reductio ad absurdum* on this finale, which recalls the studies Brahms exchanged with Joachim and will not rightly fit the other movements. The composer defeated his good intentions by lavishing his gifts too generously.

The Trio in C minor is a magnificent piece of work, a self-

* A variant of Luther's "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me."—E.B.

portrait if ever Brahms created one, amazingly concentrated—an extract of his whole nature compressed into thirty-six pages. In the first bar the principal theme is hurled down in chords like thunderbolts, and we can see the master at the piano, throwing back his head with a mighty jerk, with flashing eyes, a grey-blond mane and a full, awe-inspiring beard, and we seem to hear his curious grunting and panting as he plays. In the serious second subject, saturated with a deep glow and planing along on broad wings, his soul is at peace. Its psychological relation to the main theme may be gathered from the fact that it is derived from the triplet figure that occurs at the repetition of the first subject immediately after the opening statement. The whole material grows out of the same seed. The working-out is very concise, allowing no superfluous bar and no thematic mutiny, and this economy tells us more than the most explicit development. The presto, in the first three notes of which those of the first movement (second subject) are again evoked, is a nebulous and humorous tale in the fantastic manner of Callot,* enchanting and light-footed in its unsubstantial dream-tangles. The andante is a game of question and answer between piano and strings, who throw to each other the flowery wreaths of a melody in a delicately abbreviated $\frac{7}{4}$ time:—a kissable and gentle piece. The finale reverts to the defiance and agitation of the opening, but its thematic material is smaller. Brahms, apparently surly, is in reality quite tractable.

The G major string Quintet is Waldmüller in music. The Prater awakens “and the many pretty girls in it,” as Brahms himself said to Kalbeck, when the latter guessed at the landscape background of the zestful, light-winged and amorous music and hit upon the truth. If Nietzsche had known the master’s last chamber works and been able to receive them in the whole sanity of his sun-thirsting, dithyrambic nature, he would have revised his opinion of Brahms, who never before made music that so bravely affirmed life and so joyously enjoyed its sensuous pleasure. It is almost with consternation that one sees the sexagenarian inventing more richly, more easily, naturally and captivately, than he had ever done in his youth. Now that he commanded

* The author, of course, does not attribute story-telling to the engraver Jacques Callot: he is thinking of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s tales “in the manner of Callot.”—E.B.

form without strain and without striving after a forced grandeur, notion after notion came to him in an inconceivable wealth, and no sullen reflections clouded this grace and serenity. With the opening of the Quintet, where the impetuously upsurging cello theme is thrust through the tremolos of the other four instruments, Brahms had endless trouble, for it would never sound quite as he had imagined it: either the cello was covered and the main theme thus obscured or the festive rustling of the others was weakened to the point of tameness, or else the cellist had to force his tone and so disfigure the fine, bold theme by grating noises. When the Rosé Quartet gave the first performance of the work in Vienna, Brahms reluctantly agreed to the strengthening of this phrase by letting a viola play in unison with the cello, but he retained his own reading in the score and would not even modify it by the directions suggested to him by Joachim, who proposed that the parts, which begin with a strong accent, should be given a *diminuendo* followed by a *crescendo*. As it is, the passage has never yet sounded ideally, and if it were ever to do so, a more sonorous instrument would have to be specially constructed for it. The singing, languishing, yet never cloying second subject is seductive, almost erotic; but there is much that is wonderful about the whole movement, the sublime mastery of which is not detected until a close study is made,—which is as it should be, for whenever craftsmanship is immediately noticeable, the bloom is stripped off the thematic butterfly wings. Here it remains unimpaired in every movement and gleams in deep colours:—like a Camberwell beauty * in the little adagio that takes up but five pages of a small score and contains a song of almost Beethovenian greatness, a movement continually interrupted by restless sighs and at last winging itself out into the distance in a feverish ecstasy; like an Apollo butterfly in the graceful, serene and tender intermezzo, where all the good spirits of the Viennese Forest seem to be at their frolic of love. This movement always had to be repeated, even at the concerts of the Joachim Quartet, where that practice was regarded as a revolutionary breach of an old and hallowed tradition. In the nimble, eager, buzzing stir of the

* The German equivalent, *Trauermantel* (literally Mourning Cloak) is much more appropriate. Brahms, who scorned even the honours of Cambridge, certainly knew nothing of the beauties of Camberwell.—E.B.

finale we seem to see the busy throng among the booths in the Prater, enjoying Punch and Judy, and the roundabouts suggested by the condensed rondo form. It is as if the gloomy Rembrandt had unawares caught hold of the wanton brush of Frans Hals.

In the Trio and Quintet with clarinet is perfection, the last sweetness of maturity, a late felicity undisturbed by any premonition of approaching death. It is still day: the sun is almost too bright and hot; the flowers in their fullest splendour let fall their petals at the least beating of a little bird's wing. Here is summer's bliss and autumn's foreboding, a mood of indescribable stillness and mildness, barely touched by apprehension.

All this is felt even more keenly in the Trio than in the much beloved Quintet. The Trio, strangely enough, has not really been discovered yet, though it is beneficent as a rare caress from a hand that has often inflicted pain and now feels doubly gentle. Each movement is a love poem of unspeakable tenderness. The first is shy and gladly hopeful at once: its chief subject, rising in an arpeggio of the tonic chord of A minor and then descending through three diatonic notes, is like an expectant upward glance followed by a stooping for a kiss; the second, in the relative major, has a simple animation and becomes so quietly exalted in an expression of modest yearning that it smites the heart. What follows is more a spinning out than a development of the themes, and this gives the movement the effect of an extended song which the romantic and captivating sound of the clarinet removes into a sphere of dreams and of magic. The adagio glows so fervently in its uninterrupted singing as to oppress the hearer's breast deliciously; he would indeed be unwilling to tear himself away from it, did not the loveliest intermezzo come to lead him into a land of love where there is no disillusion: it is the most gracious and wistful of dance songs and you drink it in as a butterfly sips honey. One shudders at the thought that a man of such capacity for love was granted to experience all this tenderness in his music alone. The finale may be accepted as a remembrance of childhood: a theme from Schumann's *Album for the Young* colours the principal subject and there are children's games of wild rides and roundelays while a tear seems to fall into the composer's grey beard. However, this movement is weaker than the preceding

ones. The whole piece is unheroic: it sings not of the sons of Atreus, but of love alone.*

In the clarinet Quintet, the immediate success of which was greater than that of any other work by the master, there are two movements of such world-removed beauty that they outshine the other two, which are like them, but paler. Goethe's idea of the primeval plant is here vindicated, as may be seen from the derivation of the whole work from a single phrase—the third bar of the principal theme. As in Goethe, this is the leaf out of which, and in association with which, root and stalk, flower and fruit are evolved by a mysterious transformation. The theme consists altogether of four bars, divided into two pairs:—thirds moving up and down in adjacent notes revolving round the dominant and the third of B minor, completed by two songful turns, interlinked like rings. These four bars bring forth the whole work. But however fascinating the late-summer mood and the sweet barcaroles of this movement may be,—it is like a lightly rippled and faintly misty sheet of water,—however insatiably one may listen to the singing second subject, which takes up those important turns of the main theme and develops them, however much one may delight in the way in which the whole piece is permeated by that wreath of thirds at the opening, it all pales before the fantastic magnificence of the rhapsodic adagio. Here is a dream of the Puszta. At first we hear a shepherd's shawm piping quietly to a chorus of muted strings: a placid evening song in the twilight, with but here and there a bright accent, as though a star were twinkling. Then the music seems to breathe its last; but suddenly the sky is lighted up flaming red and a gust of wind bends the sedge. And now the shawm begins to pour out an impassioned lay of irregular, wildly sorrowful nature notes, sobbing and alluring like some demoniac evocation; the pious evening song again resounds and with gentle obstinacy tries to establish itself, but it has to give way to the voice of the heathland which is now taken up by the violin; the strings tremble like the moorland reeds, and again the mild song is intoned, only to be once more silenced by the shawm that sings so passionately out into

* A quotation from Schubert's song, *An die Leyer*. Richard Capell, in his book, *Schubert's Songs* (Benn), gives a prose paraphrase of Franz von Bruchmann's words:—"Of the classical heroes, of Heracles or the celebrated Atridae, I fain would sing. I strike a chord, but my song always turns into a love-song. . . ."—E.B.

the nightfall. For an instant we feel that man and nature together will break into a fervid song of heathenish exultation. But now the sound abates; the Pan's ditty throbs once more in the violin, the clarinet sounds like the cry of a strange bird, and for the last time the alluring call is heard like a remote echo; then the contemplative song of the opening is intoned once more and gains the upper hand; the haltingly palpitating triplet syncopations suggest a lingering excitement in man's beating heart. At last all dies away very softly: the ardent vagaries of the Puszta melody are pacified into pensively even triplets. There is calm and radiance: the clear starlit sky spans itself over a world lost in slumber.

For this one movement, which is masterly without wilful mastery, where Brahms forgot himself and his striving after formal subtleties, and which for this very reason belongs to the greatest of his creations, I am willing to give all the songs of triumph and *Parzengesänge*, all the motets, *Gedenksprüche* and chorale preludes; to give, further, four of the symphonic movements into the bargain, with the whole of the more recent atonal music thrown in. Like a last radiance of the sun before it sets, the genius of Johannes Brahms here shines as brightly and gloriously as ever before, and as it was but once more to shine in a progress now so near the summit.

After this unique movement it would be hard for any piece immediately following to stand the test. It is certain that the one which actually succeeds it is inconsiderable enough:—an amiably ambling andantino with a pretty presto variant of the same theme through which rippling clarinet passages run like a light wind. Too closely resembling this in its thematic character, but more lively and attractive, is the varied finale, the close of which is again entirely ravishing. Over the last variation floats like fleecy clouds a figuration in the rhythm and character of the principal theme of the first movement, and after this cunningly prepared transition the opening of that movement is heard again, now quite still, transfigured and melancholy, merging into silence with the characteristic turn of the main theme. Thus falls a star, and thus it is extinguished.

The two clarinet Sonatas are in the nature of epilogues. They have the intimacy of a diary, of friendly converse, of lyrical

jottings. Two or three movements are pensively playful, and the first movements, more especially that of the E flat major Sonata, have that subterranean passion which often smoulders most dangerously in Brahms's outwardly most tranquil music. But these works have no very great meaning for those who live in the world of chamber music; much less, at any rate, than the last Intermezzos, Fantasies and Capriccios for piano. These ballads without words tell of silences which, for those who know how to listen, have endless messages to give of the composer's very soul. They tell of a living heart's dead loves. A piece such as the secret-laden Intermezzo in E flat minor, like the Witch of Endor, conjures up figures of the past. Never was Brahms so alone with himself as in these apparent improvisations; it is a sacrilege to drag them out into the glaring light of the concert room. Their contemplation is so personal, so blessed with world-removed melody, that it is almost an indiscretion to play them to a friend, for one feels as though one gave away a secret confidence. I do not think that I am wrong in assuming that all these sounds of self-communion float around the white tombstone at San Remo below which Elisabeth von Herzogenberg has been slumbering since January 7, 1892, and upon which is a portrait bust by the masterhand of Adolf Hildebrand bearing the childlike and serious features of the "glorious Frau Lisel." These monologues are obituary poems and belated love letters that call woefully and bitterly into the void.

I shall now have to devote a few words to some works which the master wrote partly for his entertainment and partly to try his hand,—in the true sense of the term:—the pianist's hand. The main object, however, was to incite Clara Schumann to study and perhaps also to provide her with material for the display of her virtuosity at concerts. They are elaborations, or rather aggravations, of other composers' works, arranged to suit his own pianistic technique. These studies include Weber's *Perpetuum mobile* (rondo from the C major piano Sonata) arranged in double thirds, a study by Chopin treated in a similar manner, two different versions of a presto by Bach and lastly, as a little stroke of genius, the same master's *Chaconne* set for the left hand alone and probably written with recollections of Joachim's magnificent interpretation of a work which, arranged for a pianist's two hands, can

never suggest a violinistic impression so vividly as it does with the spreading of the chords necessitated by a transcription for a single hand. All these pieces, to which a Gavotte by Gluck must be added, hold the interest by their enrichment of the originals' properties of sound and by the problems with which they confront the pianist; but they are playable by few, for they are enormously difficult and give us an insight into the piano technique of Brahms, who could perform these transcriptions with ease. With the *Chaconne* he intended to give Clara Schumann a little pleasure, and it proved a great joy: it is almost like a case of parapraxis,* of which Sigmund Freud speaks in his psycho-analytic lectures, that Clara sprained her right hand immediately after it reached her and had to use her left if she wished to play at all. Thus the *Chaconne* arrangement not only provided her with a welcome distraction, but at the same time with a means to continue her practice. She would hardly have taken up the problem and solved it with so much zeal had not her accident forced her to set all her other studies aside for it; in other circumstances she might have fought shy of it and failed to realize the loving thoughtfulness that prompted it.

From the abundance of Brahms's vocal works I can only make a choice of isolated examples. Unless I overload this paragraph unduly, it is impossible to attempt a detailed discussion, even if I made a rigorous choice of those items which he did not "make," which, that is to say, readily fell to him, sweet and fragrant, from the tree of life like ripe, golden fruit. Once again, I do not aim at completeness, but coherence; not at chronology, but psychology. Many a reader may miss this or that favourite song in these pages and think much else superfluous. I can but act as a guide from my own profoundly personal experience of Brahms, and may thus only speak of things which add a particular trait to his portrait or to my mind partake of perfection. Whoever gives more than that cannot be quite honest; whoever demands more must go elsewhere.

* This, according to Ernest Jones's "Psycho-Analytical Glossary," is the technical equivalent for the term *Fehlleistung* used by the author. Its literal translation would be something like "negative achievement." It indicates mistakes which have an unconscious significance.—E.B.

The second set of *Liebeslieder* waltzes showed something beside the melancholy grace of one who had taken root in Vienna:—his growing affection for Johann Strauss, whose musical fertility never ceased to astonish him and for whose human qualities he cared so much that he chose Ischl as his permanent summer residence partly for this reason. He took pleasure in his frequent hours of conversation with this man of genius, who was as modest and winning as he was gifted and who regarded Brahms somewhat diffidently as a paragon of musical erudition and his work as music of a terrifying and abysmal profundity. Since these second love songs Brahms had written nothing for more than one voice that made such an effect as the *Zigeunerlieder*, the text of which was supplied by his friend Hugo Conrat, whose daughter, Ilse, made the master's monument in the Central Cemetery. The poems were versified after a rough translation from the Hungarian. The little folksongs upon which Brahms based the *Liebeslieder* are sung by the peasantry, especially by Cossacks and Poles, as improvisations to their national dances, and they are called by names the equivalents of which are something like "frothers" or "rushers" or "roarers." Brahms's waltzes hardly froth or roar; they have a patrician middle-class tone elevated by genius that still betrays something of a popular origin, for we seem to smell a faint fragrance of the soil in them. But the Gipsy Songs really do froth and roar. How genuine these Magyar tunes seem when Brahms invents them is proved by the few pieces among the Hungarian Dances composed by himself and accepted since as original national melodies. The finale of the G minor Quartet, too, might have been written by a compatriot of Rákoczy. In the Gipsy Songs he once more ennobled this burning, boisterous, jubilant and desperately plaintive primitive music; he substituted finer spices for the biting cayenne pepper and softened down the melodic features of the *lassú* and the *friss* to what may be called a general Magyarization of the atmosphere. We have thus an idealized apotheosis of the species in the eleven Gipsy Songs for vocal quartet, in which the accompaniment no longer suggests the dulcimer and the fiddle, no longer imitates the striking and clanking, the whining and clattering of the Hungarian band, but gains its folky effect by its lute-like, transparent pianistic sound and avoids the

monotony of the unavoidable $\frac{2}{4}$ time by the happiest devices of contrast. The first number has the effect of a sweet and fiery Tokay. The melody rushes along, chased by restless triplets in the piano, the bass of which adds to the excitement by abrupt beats, like the muffled thuds of bass drums and cymbals. Delightfully "frothing" are the saucy "*Röslein dreie in der Reihe*," with its pertly graceful and glittering melody and its plucked accompaniment, and the spur-rattling "*Brauner Bursche führt zum Tanze*," with its heat and conceit. But the pearl in this flaming red chain of garnets is the seventh number, "*Kommt dir endlich in den Sinn*." Its reproachful tone at the opening, followed by an outburst of fervour, not unmixed with a secret anxiety at the words "betray me not, leave me not," is so full of feeling and yet so artless, there is such a fever of unwept tears in the loving and entreating melody that one suddenly realizes how the composer's heart's blood burns in this music. This is one of the songs the name of whose creator will be forgotten in a few decades, for it will have become a folksong. Brahms never wished for a better immortality.

The sombre grandeur of the *Gesang der Parzen* overshadows the other choral compositions of the later years. It is perhaps only my personal feeling that lets me see nothing that is Greek in this rough-hewn work. To my mind the Fates here are weird sisters in the costumes of Handel's time. The four-bar periods, the almost geometrical symmetry of the thematic structure and the square Germanic style all conspire to produce this impression. These goddesses of destiny are painted by Dürer or Holbein rather than by Feuerbach or Böcklin. Contradictory, too, is the melodic softening at the words, "The rulers avert the blessing of their eyes." The hopelessness of condemnation is penetrated by a gleam of hope that contradicts the meaning of the words. That Brahms composed the after-clause, "Thus sang the Fates," as well is easier to understand and to justify: we have here an epilogue not unlike that in the *Song of Destiny*, except that the voices continue to sing. If in performance they are detached from the bulk of the choir, the master's intention becomes a good deal clearer:—he did not wish to forgo the utterance of the distressed human soul in this peroration. This is a work of an iron implacability, sunless and armour-plated. Its melodic

element could only be unmelodious, disproportionately large and carved out of a rock. It is so, and yet it might perhaps have been even more barbaric, more unshapen, more primeval. But as it is, the enormity of its thematic bodies far exceeds human measure, and so it awakens but a shuddering respect, while the heart remains cold.

It is the same with most of the Motets. The most engaging are those dedicated to the Bach scholar Philipp Spitta, whom Brahms cordially admired. This is true especially of the first number, which in spite of the rigid fugal form at the beginning and the fourfold canon in the second part, speaks to the emotions rather than to the mind, by its insistence on the initial question, the blossoming of free melody and the comparatively warm thematic invention. Again, pieces like the second and third numbers in Op. 110 wear the face of the Brahms who so wonderfully and impressively shaped the words of the holy scriptures in the *German Requiem* and the *Four Serious Songs*. But the mere playing with mechanical, lifeless subjects and their stiffening into artful structures, as for example in the fugue of the first Motet in Op. 29, where the voices grip into each other like wheels that work to no purpose, is incomprehensible in so soulful and inventive a master as Brahms. It can be explained only by the psychology of his will and conscience, which at times, like a simoom, buried all his budding verdure in a heap of sand. No doubt music is conditioned in the last resort by number and proportion, but those who have no other conception of it and give shape to that conception alone will no more be true musicians than those who know nothing or care to know nothing of these factors. But the odd thing is that some of these compositions, which, if nothing else, would be biographically important as part of the studies exchanged with Joachim, give the impression, for all their desiccated and automatic lifelessness, that Brahms really took an emotional share in their structure. However, words and dynamics may impart an effect that has nothing to do with the musical invention as such. This may be put to the proof by the simple expedient of omitting the text: what remains will show that Wagner's phrases of the "wooden Johannes" was not altogether beside the mark. Conversely, let anyone try over the first movement of the Requiem without reference to the words

and see if it does not touch and elevate just the same, even without the association of more than one number with the old chorale, "*Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten.*"

Among the vocal Quartets and the short choruses there are a few choice pieces, though we seldom come across the personality there who created the chamber works or songs like the *Wanderer*, *Feldeinsamkeit*, the Daumer songs, *Mainacht* and other wonders of song-writing to be found by the score. I will briefly name a few of them in order to come the more quickly to the greater glories: the two settings of *Nachtwache*, for instance, of which the second is a little masterpiece. Within twenty-one bars it captures all the peace of night and the lulling of an anxious heart, and is moreover an astonishingly perfect feat of structural balance and vocal texture. (See the obstinate question, "*Ruhn sie?*" in the basses and its inversion, "*Sie ruhn!*") Then the charming *Von alten Liebesliedern* with its unusual three-bar periodicity and the change to a two-bar metre in the gracious and merry refrain. Again, the folksong-like *Dein Herzlein mild*, the moody nocturne *Oschöne Nacht*, or *Spätherbst* with its melodic crossings gliding like streaks of mist, and the chordal afterbeats over the grey welter of triplets, which gleam like the lights in distant windows (Vocal Quartets, Op. 92). One cannot help thinking of those choruses intended as glad thank-offerings to women singers:—the convivial *Tafellied*, for example, and the amusing and pointed *Thirteen Canons for Women's Voices*, where he confronts his singers with some knotty problems, as though he wished to take a surreptitious revenge for the wasted attentions for which in his hunger for love he was ever ready. However, he did not himself escape his own irony, as the following incident proves. He never liked people to allude to his shortsightedness, which was his only bodily defect. When, soon after a performance of Schumann's *Faust*, a gentleman who was intent on making conversation at any cost asked him whether his eyesight did not interfere with his conducting and whether he did not need spectacles, he promptly replied:—"Yes, certainly. When I look into the score and see the words, 'Here women are passing by,' I at once put on my glasses!" All these songs for several voices, even the finest among them, seem to me contrived rather than inspired, due more to the master's hand than to his heart, produced—as the sophis-

tication of language will have it—by artifice. It is—may the vulgar comparison be forgiven—as if they had not been tasted at the hot wellsprings from which the overwhelming things in Brahms's music have come, but had been bottled. The same noble stuff is there, the same chemical ingredients, but there is need of an artificial warming-up. Nearly all these pieces are works of the study.

Of the songs for one voice which have the same effect on me,—and there are famous examples among them,—I will say nothing, for I should come to no end were I even to name but those I love best. But a few at least I must confess to caring for uncommonly. Affection such as this, no doubt, is quite unseemly in one who ought to be an orderly, objective biographer; but one must truly have ink in one's veins, a heart of sawdust and a brain of glue if one does not simply begin to blubber over a song like *Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer*. What else is one to do on hearing this sadly tender melody that will come but haltingly over the singer's lips, that voice of dull care which so obstinately repeats the ghostly echo of its D $\sharp$. C $\sharp$ admonition, and the successions of hectic $\frac{6}{4}$ chords (carped at by Elisabeth von Herzogenberg), which intensify the impression of an uncertain path? Again, when in *Auf dem Kirchhof* the rain-showers of those piano arpeggios and the obliterated inscriptions suggested by an indistinct melodic line paint a picture of the graveyard, when a short instrumental interlude announces eternal salvation and the chorale, “*O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*,” is alluded to, is not all the dread of nothingness and the trust in eternal peace brought home to the listener? Do we not become young again on hearing the serenade, *Der Mond steht über dem Berge*, hear fountains and lime-trees whispering in the moonlight, and take part with the three students in their song? (Has it been noticed that the little refrain in the piano, with its guitar-twang, contains a motif reminiscent of the *Academic Festival Overture*? The secret of the musician's association of ideas and its causes ought to be made the subject of a careful study, for there are surprising analogies.)

One would like to cudgel anyone who remains indifferent to songs like the *Nachtwandler* with its moonstruck wavering between major and minor, the planing song of its gentle but

irresistibly progressing melody and its forcible exhortation at the close; to the *Minnelied*, the master's loveliest troubadour song that seems as if it could never finish its picture of love and the chivalries of the tourney; to *Feldeinsamkeit* with its feeling of dissolution in the universe through the mystery of a melodic inspiration that actually seems to carry us into eternity, though the picture is only that of bright clouds moving overhead (thirds in the piano high above the voice part), profound midday stillness (middle register left empty), and a poet reposing on the grass (basses almost motionless); to *Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht* with its brooding and dragging opening, its flagging and darkening, and at last that radiant dream picture one fancies to see in reality; not to mention that nightingale, than which none has ever sung more ardently and yearningly.

Glorious above all are the Daumer songs. In *Wir wandelten* the human voice and the piano embrace each other in canon, an image in sound of the two people who go hand in hand, and afterwards their thoughts ring like golden bells in the afterbeat of B.F# on the piano, "so wondrous sweet and wondrous fair as in the world no other sound." This is not to be surpassed in heartfelt emotion, nor in melodic nobility, save by two other songs. One of these is *O wende diesen Blick*, where a soul moved to its depths expresses its feelings with a musical truthfulness that burns itself into the heart. That supplicating entry of the voice, the more and more entreating continuation, the anxious muttering at the crisis and at last that outburst of dismay,—all this attains to an immense tragic power within forty-two bars. The manner in which outward collectedness and inwardly burning anxiety is musically depicted by an avoidance of the tonic until the accompaniment settles on it at the last bar is unique. The other sublime song, *Schön wars, das ich dir weihte*, is so full of immeasurable sorrow in the perfect calm of the pain-laden melody which tells of both endurance and reproach that for sheer reverence one must relinquish any attempt at analysis.

Where continue? There is the *Sapphische Ode*, in whose dark, sultry, tremulous notes the crimson of heavy-scented roses glows visibly; the *Mädchenlied*, where four times the spinning wheel is arrested by gloomy thoughts, four times driven on again,

and where the close is silent submission to grief; the unrestrained force of *Wehe, so willst du mich wieder, hemmende Fessel, umfassen*, and its wildly impetuous despair at the end; *Frühlingstrost*, which reminds one of Max Klinger's Ovidian landscapes, a vocal sonata movement almost, incomparable in the adherence to and the modifications of the singular poetic metre in that inward jubilation and expansion of a melody that announces a warm March, the fluttering and flowing of triplets like streaming ribbons, the restless urge of spring in the displaced rhythms set against the voice. In *Dämmerung senkte sich von oben*, that wondrous song of nightfall animated by hazy figures, the tone-painting is as convincing as in the setting of Schack's *Abenddämmerung*, haunted by whispering dream phantoms. Let anyone maintain here that there was not a secret Wagnerian corner in Brahms. And what of *Unbewegte laue Luft*, in the second part of which the motif of the first comes to its fruition, a song full of lovely nocturnal stillness where we hear but the deep breathing of a world asleep and so become the more aware of inward voices? The incredible unity of this impassioned love song could have been attained by nothing short of thematic relationship, and even so it remains inexplicable. Again, there is the heavenly ecstasy of a melody like that of *Wenn du nur zuweilen lächelst*, . . . there is no end to it all.

It is extremely interesting to study the treatment of the versification in the songs of Brahms. The sonnet, *Der Liebende schreibt*, which reflects Goethe's calm serenity in its music, and the *Sapphische Ode* are two examples among many of the extraordinary art with which Brahms reproduced the structure of a poem in musical form. In his treatment of the metre he is more careless, though even here he sometimes succeeds in creating remarkable subtleties without confusing or destroying the poetical rhythm, as for instance in his deft handling of hexameters. His feeling for language, however, is questionable, and at times definitely absent. If a poem awakens a musical idea in him, he cares little whether it will necessitate distortions, absurdities or even grammatical aberrations, as in the famous passage, "*Mir ist, also ob ich längst gestorben bin*," in *Feldeinsamkeit*. Such a bureaucratic horror as Daumer's "I would give much to know what you thought of that case," which occurs in so

glorious a song as *Wir wandelten*, of all things, is by no means isolated. The collection of *Brahms Texts* by G. Ophüls is instructive in that respect and forms a contribution to the psychological study of the musician possessed by inspiration and careless of all else.

This carelessness shows itself even more plainly, and unfortunately much more frequently, in his declamation, which is often annoyingly disturbing when it spoils one of his miraculous songs. Things like "*dort, wo sich die Wege scheiden*" in the startlingly disconsolate *Ein Wanderer*, the false scansion of "*Wie bist du, meine Königin*," and the misplaced accent in *Feldeinsamkeit*, where it should be on "clouds," not on "white,"* are hard to forgive. Worse still is the portamento drawn across three notes and the coincidence of the last, unaccented syllable with the strong beat at "*Immer leiser wird mein Schlu-u-mmer*,"—a blot on this unspeakably delicate melody. A modern composer would probably have avoided it by placing the "mmer" on the last unaccented quaver of the bar and letting the piano strike the C# that completes the phrase, thus renouncing neither the correct declamation nor a melody which—and here is the catch—would never have occurred to any modern composer. All these examples might be multiplied a hundredfold, and the injudicious and neglectful handling they show is the more regrettable because it could have been avoided without difficulty. It would perhaps strike us less disagreeably, had we not been accustomed by Wagner, and still more by Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss, to a declamation so discerning that it sometimes improves upon the poet, and were it less difficult either to expect or to forgive such a defect in a master who in all other respects expended such devoted care on his work. That the inviolate beauty of the melodic line and the preservation of the immaculate idea were of greater importance to him than details of accentuation is so obvious that it would be foolish to expatiate upon it; but if he could not draw his melodic arches to perfection without avoiding such disfiguring faults, he ought to have respected himself a little more and the poet a little less, and adjusted the words without qualms. But then, he actually did this on occasion, and we must therefore draw the conclusion that his sensitive musician's ear

* These are cases in which the translator can, for once, improve on the original.—E.B.

was insensitive to the mysteries of language, to its finer shades and accents.

Another thing frequently strikes one as odd in his songs. He would avoid setting a poem continuously, if he could possibly do so, and he preferred the strophic song form to all others. From this predilection small incongruities, some of them hardly perceptible, arise here and there. The melody that fits the first verse as the skin fits a body, may be no more than a garment for the second or third. Although Brahms levelled such differences to a certain extent by changing his accompaniments, one is often consciously or unconsciously aware that the development of the poem calls out for similar development in the music. This preference is explained by his love of folksong, to which we are indebted for one of the most treasured works of his advanced years. The seven books of *German Folksongs* which he collected and wrote down all through his career and at last published are at once a protest and a conquest,—a protest against the frivolous and unimaginative manner in which such arrangements were dished up in general, and particularly in the collection published by Erk and Böhme in the 'eighties; a conquest of these simple and heartfelt expressions of the people's soul for the benefit of art. Brahms arranged these ingenious tunes with an uncommon feeling for style, much as he had treated the Hungarian Dances, and so made them his own. That most of the melodies might have originated in his own mind is not especially surprising, for he chose, of course, those which appealed most immediately to his nature and his feelings. His harmony and still more his pianistic treatment with all those supporting or superimposed voices in thirds and sixths, his retarding or accelerating syncopations, his cross-rhythm and his ample chords, which make an orchestra of his piano (while he often deals with the orchestra as if it were a keyboard instrument), make typically Brahmsian songs of all these tunes, though their red-cheeked soundness and simple freshness is nowhere sacrificed. Brahms at first intended to write a pamphlet against Erk and Böhme, but he afterwards changed his mind. Perhaps he remembered the calumnies he had endured after the publication of the Hungarian Dances and thought of Hebbel's distich:

Artist, never with words, but with deeds encounter the foe;
Should he throw stones, make yourself sculptures of them.

He preferred to set up the monument of this folksong collection, which contains one treasure after another and—without any pose—he valued it more highly than the rest of his song production. He thought that his best original songs might just do for the worst among the folksongs. On the choice of the words also he spent endless care, making philological studies, collating different editions for months on end, and asking Mandyczewsky to assist him in the revision. No doubt here and there a questionable poem found favour for the sake of a tune he particularly liked; it is not easy to separate the chaff from the wheat in folk poetry. This reminds me of what Arthur Schnitzler once said to me at one of Alice Barbi's recitals, when I asked him the name of the author of some poem that had arrested my attention, but had remained unnamed in the programme:—"It is either a miserable poem or a wonderful folksong," he said. This was more than an ingenious epigram, for if in such helpless verses the true simplicity and the simple truth are missing and the childish, clumsy primitiveness and angularity are artificially produced, the success of the experiment is more disagreeable than the failure of a modern lyric poem. The same is true of music.

It was a foregone conclusion that Brahms, with his infallible sense of authentic folk music, would select only the choicest fruit of German indigenous art and offer his transcriptions as an example of how that kind of thing should be done. But these seven books are a precious gift for another reason: they combine the most artless expression of feeling with an inventive and congenial intelligence. It is interesting to compare several of the folksongs with those where Brahms wrote his own music to the same words. One may say without prejudice that every one of the latter is not only much more compelling in its melodic force and beauty and more seizing in its expression, but actually, strange as it may sound, more purely and strongly folk-like. There is no comparison at all between the folk-tune and Brahms's own version of *Vor dem Fenster*, for the wondrous horn sounds of his romance simply kill the strophic monotony of the little popular tune outright. *Dort drunten im Tale* is likewise more forcible in the sadness and sincerity of Brahms's setting. By a curious coincidence Brahms was here able to transfer the accom-

paniment of his own song to the folksong without altering a single note, and it fitted perfectly.

Among these forty-nine folksongs, of which seven are set for a leading singer with chorus, there are a few which Brahms would have had to invent, had they not already existed by accident, so wholly did they become his own and so unmistakably do they show his own features. This is true above all of *Schwesterlein*, with its feverish, apprehensive syncopations at the opening and its dead-tired drooping at the end; but hardly less of *So wünsch ich dir ein gute Nacht*, of *All meine Gedanken*, with the truly Brahmsian irregularity of its periods and the extensions of its rhythm, of the saucy and unruly *Ach Moder, ich will'n Ding han*, or of *Feinsliebchen, du sollst mir nit barfuss gehn*. All these, found in another context, would be taken for unadulterated Brahms, and it is certain that in none of his own songs he treated the piano part with so much joy and care. The songs for one voice conclude with one the source of which was not to be discovered by the most skilled experts, and no wonder, for it flowed whence such of the Magelone songs as *Am Sonntag Morgen* and *Steig auf, geliebter Schatten* had been drawn. Brahms did not, it is true, acknowledge its authorship, but neither did he deny it, and *In stiller Nacht*, with its excitedly breathing and yearning melody, with its restless accompaniment that is always delayed by the beat of a quaver, remains the most beautiful of all, despite the master's modesty.

In the final song of the last book the leading singer intones the tune, "*Verstohlen geht der Mond auf*,"*—the same that shaped itself into the andante of the C major Sonata, Op. 1. The end reverts to the beginning or, as Brahms more drastically expressed it:—"The snake bites its own tail." He had come full circle.

Many times during those later years, when production became more toilsome or weaker, the master resolved to write no more. He had tilled his field with industry, was free from care, and had the right to enjoy the evening of his life at leisure. But this realization alone relieved him so and made him so glad that instantly his creative impulse made itself felt again and inspiration flowed anew. Still, now that he had bestowed on the world what he felt to be his richest and most valuable gift, the folksongs,

* See p. 9.

which organically closed the ring of his work, he decided, like Prospero, to sink his magic book into the sea. And he kept his vow truly, for the two clarinet Sonatas which were still to come and would not be restrained are but the soliloquies of his lonely hours—dreamy recollections that call many a vanished figure of his youth out of the darkness. And the *Four Serious Songs* are at once his legacy and his epitaph.

XIX

THE LAST CADENCE

CLARA SCHUMANN is dead.

News of her death does not come unexpectedly to Brahms. This dearest of friends had often ailed during the last few years and in the early spring of 1896 she had a stroke that looked at first more serious than it was: the aged woman once again gave proof of that vitality without which her body and soul could not have so vigorously withstood all the sore trials that came to her more continually and in more terrible forms than to most. She recovered. "God be praised," Joachim wrote to Brahms at the beginning of April, "better news of Frau Schumann came to-day from Frankfort. I shudder at the thought of her loss, and yet one has to get used to the idea." But Brahms thought otherwise. He replied thus:—"Well then, I cannot think sadly of what your letter tells me. I often thought that Frau Schumann might survive all her children and me into the bargain,—but I did not wish it for her. We can no longer be alarmed at the idea of losing her, not even a solitary man like myself, whom too little has outlived in this world.—And when she has gone from us, will not our faces shine with joy whenever we think of her, the glorious woman who has gladdened us all our lives and whom it was given to us to love and admire more and more? Only so shall we mourn for her."

For all that, he was not as calm and resigned as he appeared. He knew too well what he would miss if the bonds were to be loosened that had tied him to Clara during his journey through life. He at once wrote to Marie Schumann:—"Your dear Mother really gave us a fright! Happily your news is accompanied by other and more reassuring messages, so that for the time being I ought to compose myself.—Of course you are assured of my most cordial sympathy, but I should wish, in a case like this, to spare your feelings as much as possible. However, it

cannot be done, and I must beg you seriously and heartily to let me have a word if you think that we must expect the worst, so that I may come and still see the dear eyes open with which I cannot tell you how much would close for me." He was drawn by every heartstring to Frankfort, cancelled his plans for a journey to Italy at the last moment and would only too gladly undertake a useless journey and return full of joy if one he held "dear above everything" were to be preserved for him and for hers. But he was afraid of alarming Clara by his arrival and of causing inconvenience to those around her, and since her daughter, who was able to give him better news, shared his views, he remained in Vienna for the time being. The sick woman wrote him a few lines in pencil for his last birthday, May 7, 1896. They end confusedly and illegibly:—"Hearty congratulations from your sincerely devoted Clara Schumann. More than this I cannot yet, but or soon your . . ." These were to be the last words written by her, and they moved him greatly. He replied without delay:—"Never has 'all's well that ends well,' been so beautifully preached to me as to-day when your good wishes, the most treasured of all, for the 7th reached me! A thousand thanks—and may something as pleasing come to you soon." But Clara's more hopeful condition was before long to prove a delusion.

Johannes Brahms had many a colloquy with death during those last years, and more than one of his compositions, especially some of the monologues for piano, may have meant for him an effigy of himself similar to Arnold Böcklin's self-portrait with death fiddling at his shoulder. He became accustomed to listening to its mysterious voice and thought that he could expect it armed and in readiness. There was occasion for him to think of man's last goal:—in February, 1894, Billroth had died and death had restored a friend to Brahms whom in some way or another he had lost during the years of his illness. Six years earlier he had taken leave of this friend. "Billroth, who rose again from his death-bed, was no longer the same, no longer my friend, and hardly his own shadow," he said to Kalbeck on the way to the funeral of the famous surgeon, an artist in his profession. One wonders whether certain disagreements between the two can have been

the only reason why Brahms found so great a change in a man for whom he had once so greatly cared, and of whom he said:—"The Billroth whom we all knew and liked would not have approved of Massenet's *Werther* and even thought it beautiful, nor would he have accused me of exhibiting a great man's arrogance." The fault may have lain as much in the master's manner as in the morbid irritation of Billroth, who in these last years complained so bitterly of the estrangement between Brahms and himself. But the real cause seems to me to lie deeper down: it was the healthy man's abhorrence of illness and death that kept Brahms, who had never ailed, let alone been bedridden, away from his friend; there was something repugnant about sickness and dissolution to one so bursting with vigour, and he withdrew from the sight. But when Billroth was carried to his grave, his figure lived again for Brahms in all the strength of manhood. He had always himself cherished the wish to die in full consciousness, at peace with himself and prepared for the end of all things. "But it will probably not go so well with me," he sighed, for he was convinced that he would die suddenly, as his father did before him. It was to be otherwise.

How much his thoughts were occupied with death in those days is shown by a work he presented to himself for his birthday:—the *Four Serious Songs*. They are his last word,—indeed they are more than that:—an epitome of his nature without its gloom. Here is all of him that compels love and makes us succumb to him unresistingly, all that is glorious, strong and radiant, the last attainment of his soul. These songs are purged of all earthly dross and yet humanly near to us as only the dearest things in the world. If the whole of Brahms's music were to be condemned to destruction and we were allowed to keep but one work, hard as the choice would be and many wonders as would be missed, I should choose these Serious Songs. All that is immortal in Johannes Brahms is here enshrined like a talisman which discloses to the initiated a clue to the mysteries of the universe. Here is the loftiness of his sublime and deeply emotional inspiration, his inexplicable art that is revealed only to those who listen closely to these symphonic biblical and yet pagan songs, his wrestling for the highest things and his humanity purged in the fires of sorrow.

Only in Bach's Passion music, in the last Beethoven Quartets, in *Tristan*, in Mahler's *Lied von der Erde* and in Bruckner's adagios are there moments that take us so close to the secret of all things human and suddenly unfold an answer to every question.

The very choice of the biblical words could have been made only by his good angel, not by any searchings of reason,—and this is almost equally true of the *Requiem* and the *Song of Triumph*. For these verses, selected from Ecclesiastes, from the apocryphal Ecclesiasticus and from the first Epistle to the Corinthians, not only condition the structure, contrast and climax, the last dying glory of this music,—they are this John's true gospel. He had a right to say with a clear conscience:—"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, I am nothing." And his rich life brought him no other insight than this modest contentment:—"Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own work; for that is his portion." But after the word "rejoice" he set a large exclamation mark.

The very first note grips the hearer by the throat. The first song begins angrily, like a gnashing of teeth in grim dejection:—"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts;" in an apathetic D minor a hopeless plaint creeps oppressively onward and increases. A Dante of music might have depicted this crashing to the infernal regions whose sounds become a terrifying vision:—"All go unto one place." The sombre fervour of the prophet for whom all is vanity opens the second piece, where the voice begins by reciting bitterly and incisively; but later the heart stands still when the voice exclaims in a compassion too great to bear:—"but they had no comforter," while the peroration seems to turn day into night. Still more reproachfully does the third song unleash its complaint against the remorseless reaper:—"O death, how bitter art thou!" It is a terrible indictment (E minor, *grave*, $\frac{3}{4}$ time), and the song continues overwhelmingly in a tone of deep compassion with all those "whose strength doth fail them" and to whom the dark angel comes as a deliverer from pain, to whom it calls in an infinitely heartfelt gratitude:—"O death, how welcome art thou!"

But all this pales before the annunciation of love in the last

song, the crown of Brahms's labour, the apocalypse of his heart. It begins in a majestic E flat major:—" Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," and these sounds do speak so. In the B major portion in which the work closes there is a presentiment of eternal blessedness. The song flows on, to the sound of the invisible harps of cherubim, and grows into the revelation of a soul that has tasted of knowledge, the soul of one already conscious of his nearness to God. In the master's purest melody, come to him from on high, the voice closes among radiant chords:—" And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three. . . .'

Thus is a life's balance drawn.

The last sounds of this message are the same as the end of the song, *Wie bist du, meine Königin*, on the word "*wonne-, wonnevoll!*" Among the sketches which lead one to suppose that Brahms originally intended to weld the themes of these songs into a symphonic work and which date from the summer at Pörttschach, at a time when the dream picture of a fair-haired woman in a blue velvet dress haunted him continually, there are the drafts of two songs the words of which had great significance for him just then. A few turns of these melodies are incorporated in this final song, which is thus an offering to the memory of Elisabeth von Herzogenberg. After her death Brahms found it difficult to muster enough patience to correspond with the husband of "glorious Frau Lisel." Whether a kind of posthumous jealousy had something to do with it is not easy to decide; but it is certain that he refused to part with the treasure of her letters, in which the dead woman began to live for him as she had never lived before. They may have afterwards told him much more than they did when he received them and replied to them in that tone of a somewhat spiky gallantry behind which he hid himself with so much constraint and self-abnegation. Only now, in a semblance of converse with the departed, did he see, "as in a mirror," down to the very bottom of this experience of his. He erected her a monument. It was not of Clara, who was still alive when the work was completed, that he thought in writing it, as has been asserted again and again; nor of Billroth. He sang these *Four Serious Songs* to himself, in a sorrowful recollection, not free from self-reproach, of one who had gone all too soon.

It was not only a high mass for a dead love he celebrated with these songs, which—and this is extraordinarily characteristic of him—he always described as the “*Schnadahüpfeln*.”* They were also intended as a token of gratitude to one who was still among the living in return for one of the keenest pleasures he experienced at his advanced age. He dedicated them to Max Klinger, who at New Year, 1894, sent him his *Brahms Phantasie* together with all the sketches for the forty-one etchings of which this collection consists. The magic attraction exercised by the whole of Brahms’s music upon this self-willed artist, who saw and listened to the world with eyes and ears uncommonly gifted with penetration, was not the only reason for the dedication, although he had already years before consecrated his cycle of *Cupid and Psyche* to Brahms. The painter’s reverence of Brahms had deluded him into committing the indiscretion of sketching title pages for some of the songs, sent out into the world by Simrock with great pride in so unusual an adornment. But Klinger’s manner still struck most people as strange, and even Brahms himself was at first half-amused and half-repelled by these finely conceived antique-baroque cover designs. No doubt their lamentably inadequate reproduction had something to do with it, for to-day they appear serious and fanciful, if not particularly Brahmsian; it is rather a stretch of the imagination, too, to see the equivalent of Brahms’s music in that mighty product of the etcher’s art, the *Brahms Phantasie*. The master did not fail to express his irritation and disparaging scorn about the unwelcome decoration of his music. He did not spare the publisher, whom he always loved to tease, and it was inevitable that his jests should come to the ears of Klinger, whose wounded susceptibility goaded him into obtaining satisfaction by putting the master in the wrong in his own way. It was an artist’s noble revenge and at the same time one of the most touching offerings of devotion that ever honoured its object.

When I say that the leaves of the *Brahms Phantasie* are not particularly Brahmsian, I mean that they must not be regarded as a draftsman’s paraphrase of the music, much less of single compositions, but as the etcher’s highly personal impression of

* Little ditties sung to a variety of yodels by the people in the Tyrolese mountains, hardly songs, and certainly not serious.—E.B.

the sounds he had drunk in and afterwards reproduced in his own way. On contemplating these grandiose pictures, which are comparable to the greatest things in graphic art, we think more of Klinger than we do of Brahms,—and this is as it should be, else they were illustrations and not creative representation of one art by another. Brahms was wildly enthusiastic about the work, which he presented to Clara Schumann, to Joachim and all the other friends of whom he knew that they lived in his music. He was beside himself with joy and deeply moved to find a great artist who was capable of such a work and whose veneration of another induced him not only to design these magnificent etchings but to employ his needle in tracing the prosaic staves and notes of the music with the minuteness of a professional engraver. Moreover, Klinger was not out for any material profit, for he pulled only two hundred copies of the work before he destroyed the plates. Small wonder that Brahms took the man to his heart who combined industry and frugality with such ideals and such talent, and who was satisfied with nothing short of the greatest perfection it was granted him to attain. He felt the presence of a kindred soul.

It was the death of Klinger's father which gave Brahms occasion to thank the painter by the dedication of the "*Schnadahüpfeln*." Needless to say, in the sad circumstances, he did not express himself so flippantly in the letter whereby he announced his intention to Klinger; nevertheless, he wrote thus:—"What will you say if before long you receive a few little songs by me, expressly dedicated to yourself? But I often thought of you when I wrote them, and how deeply these great, profound words would affect you." It is truly characteristic of Brahms to talk casually about "little songs" while his heart is touched by the profoundest solemnity, and to suggest that only the words, but not by any means his music,—this heart-seizing entreaty of the suffering creature to the everlasting powers,—would affect the man who felt his work more deeply than most of his contemporaries. When Klinger stayed in Vienna on his way to Greece, Brahms took care of him as of a son and showed him all his affection in that rather clumsy and indirect way that was not understood by everybody. Max Klinger understood it.

He replied to this dedication, which Brahms regarded as an all

too modest token of his gratitude, by another work of art:—the very curious monument of the master at Hamburg, which shows him calmly erect, surrounded by threatening, beseeching, enticing figures. It is at once a dream in marble and a significant symbol, but one that is pictorial, not to say literary, rather than truly plastic.

Brahms really did make himself a birthday present of the *Four Serious Songs*: “I wrote them in the first week of May,” he said in a letter shortly afterwards, and one can only marvel at the fact that the most masterly of all songs should have been written down in so short a time. He took them with him to Ischl, where he went soon after that 7th of May, in order to make them ready for publication. To Simrock, too, he offered the set as “a few little songs” which, he said, he intended to dedicate to Klinger; “which will show you,” he continued, “that they are not exactly a joke,—on the contrary, they are damnably serious and at the same time so godless that the police might prohibit them,—were it not that the words are all to be found in the Bible.” He lived wholly in their atmosphere at that time; other letters of those days make us feel no less strongly how he was held in the emotional circle this work drew around him.

It was into the midst of these thoughts of the end of all things that the news of Clara Schumann’s death fell. Three days after those last lines of congratulation to Johannes, she had another and more violent stroke. She lingered on until May 20, on which day she relinquished a life that had brought so much pain and anxiety to herself and so much happiness to those around her. Brahms was quite unprepared for the news, although he knew that it might be expected every hour. What was worse, it reached him a day too late. His landlady in Vienna had left the telegram unopened and forwarded it to him by letter, thinking that it was one of the numerous superfluous and vexing messages that reached the master almost daily. Brahms had hardly an hour to get ready for the journey and to join a train which would let him arrive at his destination in time, provided he changed at various places and made use of special connexions. But the guard forgot to wake Brahms at the junction of Attnang, and when he roused himself, he discovered to his horror that he was travelling

in the wrong direction. He nevertheless achieved the all but impossible by an all-night race and arrived half dead in Frankfort, only to learn that the funeral was not taking place there, but at Bonn, Clara having expressed a wish to rest at Robert Schumann's side. To crown it all, he read in the newspaper that the interment had been postponed in order that he might be present. When at last he arrived at the cemetery, bathed in perspiration, he found that he was too late for the service in the chapel;—he met the funeral procession on its way to the grave. So he could, after all, join the others and escort the beloved Domina for the last time. But he could not bear to remain among the mourners: he took refuge behind a bush and let his tears flow at the side of his friend Rudolf von der Leyen.

When he returned to Ischl soon afterwards, there was consternation among his friends. His face was the colour of a lemon. But nobody had the courage to tell him so, and he never looked into a mirror. It was evident that the agitation of the journey had caused an overflow of bile, which in itself would have given no cause for alarm, especially in an acute case of this sort; but his friends were troubled, for they remembered that in the spring already they had occasionally noticed a curiously brownish-yellow tarnishing of his skin, which to be sure had disappeared again. At last Heuberger took his courage in both hands and asked him, much to his surprise, whether he felt quite well, giving him his reasons for putting the question. Brahms thanked him. He had actually had no idea that he looked different, but promised to consult a physician. People of his robust health are always prone to greater anxiety than the sickly. Years before, when he had caught a cold and heard a loud ringing in his ears, he was terrified by the thought of having to share the fate of Beethoven and left for Vienna by the next train to consult Billroth, who was able to send him home with a laugh. This time he went at once to one of the well-known doctors at Ischl and was able to reassure Heuberger. He was suffering, he said, from common-or-garden jaundice, caused by an undue amount of vexation, a complaint easily removed by dieting and a little cure. The patient was not told that the doctor had found a complete closing of the biliary ducts and a serious swelling of the liver, and he violently opposed the suggestion that he should visit Carlsbad.

The friends were in despair and, in order not to alarm Brahms unnecessarily and yet to leave nothing undone, Heuberger induced the famous specialist, Professor Leopold von Schrötter, to examine him on the occasion of a pretended consultation at the Imperial Court, which was then in residence at Ischl. He reassured the master completely: jaundice, he said, was not to be denied and naturally Carlsbad could do no harm to anyone in such a condition, but it was not essential; a little dieting would be necessary, otherwise the matter was of no importance,—a disagreeable indisposition, nothing more. Brahms was delighted and laughed at Heuberger, who with difficulty concealed his dismay at the diagnosis. He caught Schrötter up at the railway station and asked him for decisive information, but the doctor merely said:—"Poor fellow!—it does not matter where he spends his money." It was a death sentence, and there was no appeal.

Brahms himself, however, felt so unwell that at last he gave way to the urgent advice of the Ischl physician, Dr. Hertzka, and the desire of his friends by going to Carlsbad in September. The doctor who treated him there discovered a degeneration of the liver and an inflammation of the biliary ducts, regarding the condition as extremely serious. Brahms suspected nothing, but continued to speak and write about his troublesome "common-or-garden jaundice," longed for the time when he would no longer have to look upon *gulyas* * as the sum of all evil, delighted in the beauty of the spa and its lovely walks (though hardly in the society he had to put up with), was agreeably surprised by a visit from Ignaz Brüll, who returned quite disconsolate, and left Carlsbad more exhausted and ill than he had reached it.

I saw him again soon afterwards. People had prepared me to find him very much changed and looking pitiful, and I had been warned not on any account to betray any consciousness of the fact, since he observed with the greatest suspicion the impression he made upon those who had not seen him for some time. He was also apt, they said, to take one by surprise with questions from the unconsidered answers to which he would draw conclusions as to the true state of his health. I carefully remembered all this; but when I again stood before him, I had the greatest

* The Hungarian national dish, a stew highly seasoned with cayenne pepper.—E.B.

difficulty in dissembling. To my horror he had become almost unrecognizable. Never have I seen such a devastation in a man within so short a period. His mighty, sturdy figure had shrunk to that of a very old man, his face was a yellowish brown, his skin like leather, his wonderful blue eyes dull with whites gone yellow as quinces, his hair dry and brittle, his hands cold and hard. He gave me a heartrending glance and I could just contrive to keep my countenance. Moreover, it was easier for me than for others to deceive him, having, as I did, an excuse for any weakness, for I suffered myself seriously at that time and every look and gesture of compassions could easily be interpreted as a sign of my own condition.

I mention this merely because it leads to a remarkable observation: Brahms was obviously relieved to have a companion in sickness and found consolation in the fact that a young man could be visited by bodily pains as severe as his own. "You are still so young and you too are ill,—and you won't die either," he said again and again, looking so apprehensively at me that I felt a lump in my throat. The man who had resolved to meet his end well prepared and steadfastly was now filled with the fear of death, scrutinized each glance to see whether a pained expression of pity might not portend ill for him, clung desperately to every word that would persuade him that his illness was a harmless indisposition, disagreeable but soon mended. Not that in his heart of hearts he was deceived, I think, but he desired deception and wished others to confirm it. In the very last stages of his malady he begged the doctor to tell him nothing unpleasant. He was ashamed of his illness as of a disgrace; the repugnance of the thoroughly sound man he had been affected him even in the face of his own suffering. Thus it did him good to see a young man of twenty-six who was apparently in a worse state still; it excused, as it were, the stain he felt to be defiling his own body. For this reason he asked our mutual friends and acquaintances to whose houses he invited himself to the midday meal that I should be their guest too.

This happened fairly often: he proposed visits to his friends more frequently than before, for he simply could not endure to be alone with himself and his thoughts. The changes his illness had wrought in him manifested themselves psychically as well as

physically. He had grown quite tender and communicative; "I have even given up being rude to people," he once said in a kind of sad astonishment. But what one could not help noticing above all was the effort every step cost him, the dreadful lassitude with which the man dragged himself along who not long before was difficult to keep pace with on a walk in the country. He, once the most animated of all at table, would not infrequently go to sleep during a meal, which of course no one was allowed to notice, for he looked round most anxiously to see whether anybody had discovered it. One had to be on one's guard, too, not to offer him any particular comfort: he could become violent if he was treated as though he needed care and he would confess his weakness neither to himself nor to others. "Come along, let us go," he once said to me after lunch, taking me by the arm. "Where?" I asked. "Well, to the churchyard,—where we both ought to be," he replied and leant on my arm as we went into the next room to smoke. He could never have made up his mind to say quite simply—"Let me have your arm, I am too tired to walk alone." Another ominous sign was that he, who had been so meticulously clean, now became neglectful in this respect and was quite capable of using his table napkin as a handkerchief. More than that, he was positively astonished that I still took care to be neatly dressed. "I see you have had a new suit made," he declared one day, looking me up and down. "What are you thinking of? Look at me,—I shall not have a new coat made for such a corpse!" Yet my confidence in my recovery which the fact of my new clothes seemed to him to argue, visibly pleased him and it was clear that he thought fit to apply it to himself.

To his greater readiness to talk I owe that lengthy conversation about Wagner, Bruckner and other musicians of the time, fragments of which I have already set down. His views of the future of music were pessimistic in the extreme; he declined to speak of the innovators who had grouped themselves round Richard Strauss and prophesied the downfall of the art. How strange this sounds to-day, after a short thirty years. And what would Brahms have said to the young ones of to-day, for whom the daring subversions of that time are thoroughly old-fashioned and done with? Gustav Mahler visited Brahms in that last

summer and they had a similar conversation during a walk on the banks of the Traun. Brahms again spoke of the decline and fall of music, but Mahler suddenly took his arm and pointed down to the water with his other hand, exclaiming:—"Just look, doctor, just look!"—"What is it?" Brahms asked. "Don't you see, there goes the last wave!" It was a good symbol for the eternal movement in life and in art, which knows of no cessation. But I seem to remember that it was Brahms who had the last word, thus:—"That is all very fine,—but perhaps what matters is whether the wave goes into the sea or into a morass."

Whenever the master stayed at home in those last months, he was generally occupied with looking out old letters and manuscripts and destroying everything he did not wish to come under the eyes of strangers. "It is too sad," he sighed while he was engaged in a task that conjured up vividly so many things of the past of which he had now to take leave for ever. He could no longer read much, for everything was a strain for him and most of the new writings annoyed him. So he would sit at his window and look at his beloved Karlskirche, which always delighted him with its dome of verdigris and its gigantic columns covered by spiral mouldings: he would day-dream and try to forget the present. For decades now he had lived at No. 4, Karlsgasse. The lodging had originally belonged to a Fräulein Ludovika Vogl, from whom he had rented two plainly furnished rooms and who was the most reliable domestic spirit, as inaudible almost as a ghost. After her death he found himself in the most painful of predicaments, for he dreaded the thought of leaving a home to which he had grown attached. But with the aid of Frau Berta Faber a suitable landlady was found in the person of Frau Celestine Truxa, an editor's widow, and so things remained as they were. Frau Truxa rented the apartment and sublet the two rooms to Brahms. The two had no cause to complain of each other. Brahms was the kindest and least exacting of tenants once his confidence was gained; but during the first few days he threw cigar ends all over the place to find out whether the rooms would be kept tidy and left money lying about openly to test the servant-girl's honesty. Whenever he wished to have something mended, he would put a piece of linen or a pair of gloves (which

he scarcely ever wore) in a half-opened drawer and pretend to be immensely surprised when he found them mended in the evening. His gratitude was then almost excessive. But Frau Truxa really was the ideal landlady. She knew her lodger better and was more adroit in humouring his peculiarities than most of his friends and acquaintances. The self-sacrifice and fine human knowledge she showed in tending the sick master will never be forgotten. A small incident will tell us the kind of woman she was. Nothing agitated and alarmed Brahms more than his dreadful and visibly advancing emaciation, but Frau Truxa had the idea of making his clothes tighter from time to time. On putting on a garment thus altered and finding it more difficult to button up, he would call out to her with a radiant face:—"Look here, Frau Truxa, I have become a little fatter again at last!" He was so easy to deceive—because he wanted to be deceived.

In those days it became plain how much people cared for him. Such married friends as Victor and Olga von Miller, to whom we owe the splendid Brahms Museum at Gmunden, Artur and Berta Faber, Richard and Maria Fellingner, whose pictures and photographs of Brahms have kept his appearance vividly before our eyes, surpassed each other and vied with many others in care and tender attention, and the grateful patient was glad to be in their midst to the very end. He felt better there than anywhere else, knowing that he could unburden himself without being misunderstood. It was with Dr. Fellingner that he drew up that will whereby he made the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde the sole heir of his fortune of 400,000 marks and his library, setting aside only various legacies to relatives, to Frau Truxa and to a few societies who insured an income to aged or needy musicians. But in his dread of anything that was final and connected with death, he again and again deferred his decision to have a copy made and continued to make corrections in the draft, which he never signed. The consequence was an unforeseen succession of unpleasant quarrels and law-suits that went on for years and closed only with a variety of settlements which proved entirely contrary to the master's perfectly clear intentions and detrimental to the society he had wished to benefit.

Distant friends vied with those in Vienna who indulged him with dainties and rare wines, placed their carriages at his disposal

and were touchingly anxious to make him forget his complaint. Simrock several times sent him cases of half-bottles of champagne, one of which he could drink each evening without damage; the wife of the Duke of Meiningen, Freifrau von Heldburg, presented him with a pair of cosy slippers she had made herself and enclosed a postcard with an acknowledgment already written on it, to save the weary master the trouble of writing. Brahms was profoundly affected and surprised to find that all the love he had lavished on his music was now returned to him.

His illness made rapid progress and he sank day by day. But his interest in art remained wide awake. He eagerly watched the results of a competition organized by the Tonkünstlerverein and zealously supported a plan to call Gustav Mahler to Vienna. Mahler's production of *Don Giovanni* had clung to his memory as the most perfect he had ever heard. With panting energy he still dragged himself to his friends, to the theatre and to concerts. Joachim, who was to come to Vienna with his quartet, tried to induce him to play in public once more. He proposed the F minor piano Quintet and wrote as early as the previous autumn:—"I shall quite understand if you should be obliged to decline. Do not do so if possible, my dear Brahms, for who knows how long we shall still be able to play together." But even at that time Brahms was obliged to reply:—"Under no circumstances whatever! Not even if you were four dear sweethearts, as charming as you are serious, honoured men!" At the concert he listened from the artist's room to a glorious performance of the G major Quintet, and the acclamations were so great that he was obliged to go on the platform with Joachim. The whole audience was dismayed by the appearance of the suffering master with his ashen face and their love for the great man and great composer awoke and went out to him. People remembered how, only a year ago, he had been seen in the same place: he had played in his two clarinet Sonatas at one of Rosé's evenings and his seal-like snorting and grumbling had been listened to affectionately. Afterwards he had stood there, smothered by applause, radiant in all his strength and cheerfulness, and had bowed like a swimmer who shakes the water out of his ears,—so Joachim declared. But now he appeared like a spectre, like one who belonged to the land

whence there is no return, withstanding motionless the storm that raged round him, a lost look in his moist eyes.

Even more intense were the unprecedented ovations given to the master at a Philharmonic concert. Hans Richter gave the fourth Symphony and made up for the first careless and loveless performance by a monumental and perfect reading of the work. The public was in a frenzy of enthusiasm. But when Richter pointed to the box where only now Brahms was discovered, deadly pale, a hurricane broke out which grew after each movement. There were deafening calls, cries and clapping, people stood on their seats the better to see the master's terribly ravaged figure, hats and handkerchiefs waved to him, he was obliged to come to the edge of the box repeatedly, and at the close the acclamations simply would not end. The audience knew that they were seeing Brahms for the last time, and he knew it as well. He stood there, both hands convulsively grasping the plush covering of the balustrade, silent sobs shaking his wasted body; once more he inclined his head, with its long hair now thin and wiry, and then he stepped back.

Vienna and Brahms had taken leave of each other.

He also visited the Opera just once more to hear the first performance of *Das Heimchen am Herd* * by his old friend Carl Goldmark. The public gave the work a warm reception and an interlude, the simple theme of which reminded them of the song, "*So viel Stern am Himmel stehn*," had to be repeated. It was debated whether the passage in question was a folksong quotation or the composer's own idea, and Brahms was consulted as an authority. "No," he said, "it is not a folksong,—but it may become one." He had not always been so indulgent.

The new operetta by his much admired Johann Strauss, *Die Göttin der Vernunft*, he was also anxious to hear, not only for the composer's sake, but also for that of the librettist, Julius Bauer, who was frequently his companion at the café in Ischl and who often diverted Brahms, whom to his great amusement he would call "the greatest *Schimpfoniker* † of our time," with his audacious

* Based on Dickens's *Cricket on the Hearth*.

† A pun on *Symphoniker*. Brahms, instead of a symphonist, thus becomes something like an "invectivist."—E.B.



BRAHMS ON HIS DEATHBED
Pastel by Ludwig Michalek



and spirited wit. But now neither wit nor music availed to relieve one who was marked by death: he was obliged to leave the house after the first act.

Dr. Josef Breuer, the most eminent specialist for internal complaints in Vienna at that time and a diagnostician of genius, took over the treatment of Brahms towards the end. He was also my parents' family doctor, and thus I occasionally had news of the patient and of the nature of his disease. The physician was at first not quite sure of his diagnosis: the alternatives were cirrhosis and cancer of the liver; but before long the matter was decided. Brahms had cancer, and even if the post-mortem had not confirmed this, the fact that his father died of the same affliction and at almost the same age would have ratified the doctor's verdict. From the first moment Breuer saw that he was not to be saved and that it was only a matter of alleviation. He was among the most human of his profession, who make it a point of honour not to prolong a lost life uselessly, but to save the patient pain. The world owes him much gratitude for having done so much to give relief to the dying genius, and for having given him new confidence by white lies and encouragement.

The agony began on April 2, 1897. There was gastric and intestinal hæmorrhage, but Brahms suffered no pain. Dr. Robert Breuer, the son of the physician who treated him, spent the night with him; the patient now and again recovered consciousness, gave thanks for each gentle service in a low voice, and sank back into a swoon again. Once he groaned and complained of a painful tension in the abdomen, which was at once relieved by an injection. Then he raised himself up almost unaided to drink a glass of hock offered him by the doctor, emptied it at one gulp and leant back with the comfortable words:—"Ah, that tastes nice, thank you!" These were the last he spoke. He then went to sleep. At nine in the morning Frau Truxa approached his bed and found him peacefully asleep; but at the sight of his devastated face she could not suppress a sob. Brahms opened his eyes and looked at her sadly, then vainly tried to raise himself and to say something. Heavy tears flowed into his beard, he sank back, and was dead.

A countless crowd attended his funeral, for the public knew what they had lost. In the Protestant church a clergyman named Zimmermann spoke the memorial sermon based on the text of the *Serious Songs*. At a grave in the central cemetery offered in his honour by the municipality of Vienna Richard von Perger spoke thus:—"Here liest thou now, thou blessed of God, in this great, stern world solitude; the clouds of light pass over thee and with them thy immortal part floats away into the everlasting spaces."

And so, next to Beethoven and Schubert lies, according to his old and secret wish, the body of Johannes Brahms.

They erected him monuments—and each would have vexed him. Most of all, probably, that in Vienna, which is a faithful portrait, but a betrayal of his spirit. A somewhat ordinary and peevish elderly gentleman sits on a white pedestal and seems to think about the salaries of his clerks rather than about a symphony. But what would have chiefly enraged him is the marble lady with an unspeakably vapid and foolish face who sits at his feet and twangs his lyre. "I can't abide the female," he once said of the insipid muse on Cherubini's portrait by Ingres which somebody had presented him, and he covered the figure with a piece of cardboard. He would have said the same of the female upon whom he is now condemned to look down for all time, unless some iconoclast takes pity on him and demolishes her. Had she been given the features of Clara Schumann or Elisabeth von Herzogenberg or that of his glorious interpreter Alice Barbi, she would at least have a biographical significance; but if the master's "inspiration" had looked like that, we should not now be indebted to him for works which have carried something more of humanity, of feeling, of happiness into the world than it possessed before his coming.

No, Johannes Brahms has need of no visible monuments. His music lives and will outlast all the fashions and ridiculous catch-words of the day. And by the time it is wholly grasped again, beyond the immediate impression of its sound, the attitude of mind to which we owe it will also awaken anew, an attitude that does not manifest itself in the destruction and the denial of mastery, but in a living continuation and acknowledgment of all

that is great, in the preservation of life's symbols by artistic forms filled with a new spirit of truth and strong human feeling that was ever present in great art and will compel human hearts to the end of time.

He was in truth the man of destiny. It is idle to speculate whether he quite fulfilled his mission, whether his work was wholly due to necessity and never merely to his will, whether the path he followed was that traced for him by his innermost being. It was certainly mapped out for him, though he may have thought that he walked of his own free will away from a too alluring romanticism,—mapped out not by human design, but by fate. For his coming had to be such as it was. Music would perhaps really have run a serious risk, had he delivered himself up altogether to the dreams of his youth: he would then have been the most wonderful of the musical poets whom Wagner showed their goal in the music drama and for whom Liszt opened up new possibilities in symphonic composition, but he would never have become that complement to Wagner which we now see him to be. Richard Wagner and Johannes Brahms together sum up the music of our time. It would have begun its aberrations earlier, had they not both been there. Only in their sum are they perfectly decisive and have remained so to the present day. Truly Brahms was needed, and will be needed again, more than ever and beyond all the glory of his own work. His figure does not dazzle, but it is true and lasting, it stands like a rock in the welter of party strife, of problems and experiments, and holds out its hands to all those who strive towards what is great and noble, regardless of sensation. That is why it seems to me needful to uphold it, to-day more firmly than ever, for its mastery, its moral earnestness, its renunciatory strength and a devotion to art that tolerated nothing trifling and worthless. For it will lead once more into the right path and gives confidence to those who search and err.

His nature was—need it be formulated after all that has been said?—a middle-class spirit brought to the heights of genius, thoroughly north-German and Protestant. Metaphysical things were never at the centre of his music, but merely at the outer edge. Music was inherent in his life and experience and in the greatest moments became the answer to the enigmatic questions of existence. His mind was free from all that is licentious, unreli-

able and sensational about spurious genius, and also of the unexpected audacity with which in its insubordination it leaves the road it is ordained that the musician should walk. There lies his greatness, and at the same time his defect. He stands in the line of Goethe's followers:—Gottfried Keller, Theodor Fontane, Storm, —descendants of the people, all of them. Inward order without pedantry, restraint of excesses without priggishness, balance gained by hard self-constraint, avoidance of all that is untidy and preposterous and falsely interesting or unscrupulously arbitrary, honourable will to perfection:—such is the hall-mark of his mentality. Yet all this is but a half-truth and can only become the whole if the other extreme as well is considered:—the dark hours, the sobbing deliriums and fits of creation, the overcoming of inhibitions, the demoniacal possessions and exaltations of one whose emotions were all dammed up and could suddenly flow forth in uncontrollable floods of tears, in dreams and sorrow, in mystic surrender to the powers of destiny. For all that, he never lost himself, was never wholly beside himself; he preserved the dignity of his nature and his work. His soul's centre of gravity was not to be displaced. He disdained the gestures of the outrageous originality of the outclassed, for he wished to be a whole master in every sense of the term. He scorned, too, the divine intoxications of the dionysiacal libertines as much as the humourless sobrieties of the mechanical and the soulless, for he desired also to be a full man.

Here is one who suffered, but was blessed in suffering. His divided feelings he forged into unity in his music, his distressed conscience into the mystic parable of form, his wrestlings into the purification of his work. He was brother to grief and through it became great. And happy? In the paroxysms and joys of creation, without a doubt. But it is heartrending to think that a master of his stamp had to go through life without the love of a woman, that the solace of laughter was denied him, and that he died weeping.





BRAHMS IN HEAVEN
Silhouette by Otto Böhrer

Haydn. Weber. Wagner. Bach. Beethoven. Mozart.

Brahms.

Schumann.

Bruckner. Mendelssohn. Schubert.

Liszt.

Bülow.

Berlioz.

Gluck. Handel (?)

APPENDIX



XX

APPENDIX

ROBERT SCHUMANN'S ARTICLE ON JOHANNES BRAHMS

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NEW PATHS

YEARS have gone by—almost as many as I once devoted to the editing of these pages, *i.e.* ten,—since I raised my voice in a territory so rich in old remembrances. I have often felt inclined to write, in spite of strenuous productive work; many new and significant talents have appeared and music seemed to show signs of acquiring new strength, as many of the high-aiming artists of these latter days prove, though their productions may be known in a comparatively narrow circle.*—It seemed to me, who followed the progress of these chosen ones with the greatest interest, that in these circumstances a musician would inevitably appear to whom it was vouchsafed to give the highest and most ideal expression to the tendencies of the time, one who would not show us his mastery in a gradual development, but like Athena, would spring fully armed from the head of Zeus. And he has come, a young man over whose cradle Graces and Heroes stood watch. His name is Johannes Brahms and he comes from Hamburg, where he has been working in quiet obscurity, though instructed in the most difficult laws of his art by an excellent and

* Schumann's footnote :—I have in mind Joseph Joachim, Ernst Naumann, Ludwig Normann, Woldemar Bargiel, Theodor Kirchner, Julius Schäffer, Albert Dietrich, not to forget that profound aspirant to great art, C. F. Wilsing, composer of sacred music. As bravely advancing heralds I must also name Niels W. Gade, C. F. Mangold, Robert Franz and Stephen Heller.

enthusiastically devoted teacher.* He was recently recommended to me by an honoured and well-known master.† He showed us by every sign, even outwardly, that he is one of the elect. At the piano he began to open up wonderful regions for us. We were drawn deeper and deeper into magic circles. With that, he is a player of genius who can make of the piano an orchestra of plaintive and loudly jubilant voices. There were sonatas,— veiled symphonies rather,— songs the poetry of which would be understood even without words, although a profound vocal melody goes through them all, several piano pieces, some of them demonic by nature and delightful in form; then sonatas for violin and piano, quartets for strings, each so different from the others that they seemed to flow from a variety of sources. And then it seemed as if he united them all into a rushing torrent, a waterfall spanned by a peaceful rainbow, with butterflies fluttering round its edge to an accompaniment of nightingales.

If he will touch with his magic wand those massed forces of chorus and orchestra and compel them to lend him their powers, we may expect still more wondrous glimpses of the spirit-world. May the highest genius strengthen him to this end, as may indeed be anticipated, since he possesses yet another genius—that of modesty. His fellow-musicians hail him on his first progress through the world, where injuries may perhaps await him, but laurels and palms also. We welcome him as a strong defender.

Each period is swayed by a secret bond between kindred spirits. Let those who belong together close the circle more firmly, that truth in art may shine ever more brightly, sowing joy and blessings everywhere.

* Schumann's footnote :—Eduard Marxsen in Hamburg.

† Joachim.

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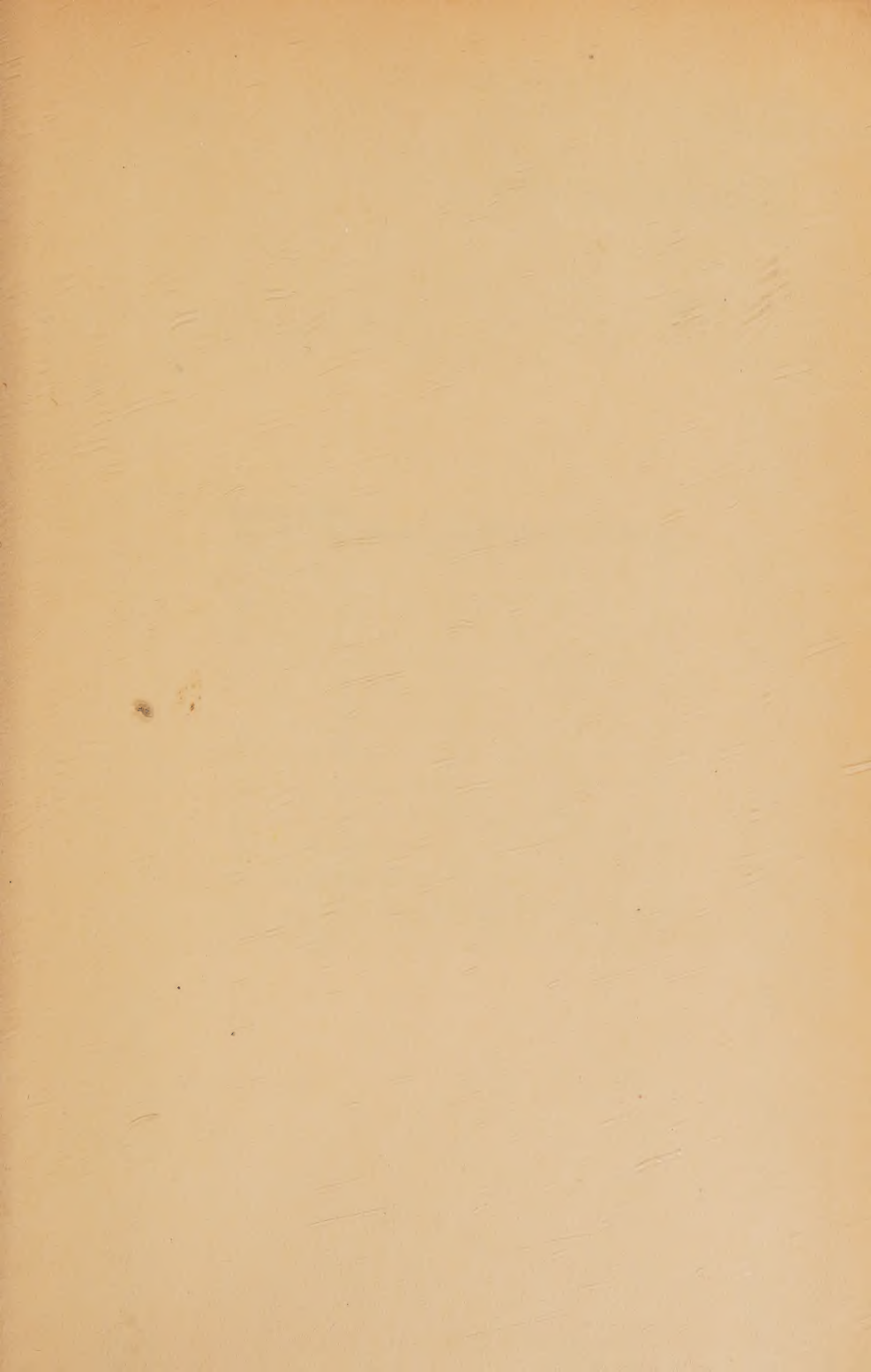
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